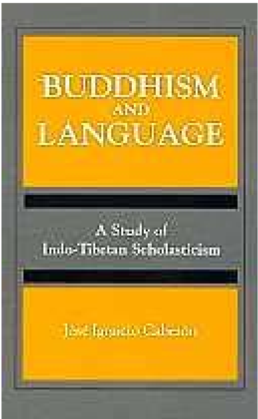


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Buddhism and Language

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SUNY Series, Toward a Comparative Philosophy of Religions Frank E. Reynolds and David Tracy, editors

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Buddhism and Language

A Study of Indo-Tibetan Scholasticism

José Ignacio Cabezón

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To the faculty, administration, students and staff of the Iliff School of Theology, without whose encouragement and support this work would not have been possible.

CONTENTS

FOREWARD

FRANK E. REYNOLDS

The set of conferences that generated the beginnings of the *Toward a Comparative Philosophy of Religions Series* were initiated in the late 1980s. At that time there was a spirited debate within the planning committee concerning what topic would provide the most appropriate and useful focus for the project we had in mind. Two topics had serious support"myth and philosophy" and "religion and language." The decision was made to begin our project by concentrating attention on the first of the two alternatives; and those who have been involved have never regretted that decision.

The first set of conferences led to the publication of Reynolds and Tracy, eds., *Myth and Philosophy* (Volume 1 in the Toward a Comparative Philosophy of Religions Series, SUNY, 1990). The deliberations and explorations thus initiated led very naturally to two further sets of conferences, which produced materials for two additional collections of essays edited by Reynolds and Tracy*Discourse and Practice* (Volume 3 in the series, 1992) and *Religion and Practical Reason* (Volume 7 in the series, forthcoming).

Though the topic of religion and language was not the primary focus of the conference-generated volumes, nor of the first two single-authored books in the seriesLee Yearley's

Mencius and Aquinas (Volume 2, 1990) and Francis X. Clooney's *Theology Alter Vedanta* (Volume 4, 1992)the interest in issues concerning the relationship between religion and language was never far from the surface.

Issues of religion and language were, for example, clearly implicated in a spirited exchange that developed between two of the central participants in the project. In an essay in *Myth and Philosophy*, "Denaturalizing Discourse: Abhidharmikas, Propositionalists, and the Comparative Philosophy of Religions," Paul Griffiths set forth a strong position defending the privileged status of abstract doctrinal language in the formulation and defense of religious claims in general and Buddhist claims in particular. In her essay in *Discourse and Practice*, "Buddhist Philosophy and the Art of Fiction," Francesca Cho Bantly formulated a powerful counterargument in which she made the claim thatin certain Chinese Buddhist traditions at leastfictional discourse rather than denaturalized discourse held sway as the most adequate and the most efficacious linguistic mode for the expression of Buddhist ontology and soteriology.

With the publication of Ben-Ami Scharfstein's *Ineffability: The Failure of Words in Philosophy and Religion* (Volume 5, 1992), the topic of religion and language was brought strongly and explicitly to the fore. Scharfstein, in his broadly comparative discussion, considered a variety of traditions in the history of religions in which the power of Word or words to adequately represent religious reality has been affirmed. He considered a variety of other religious traditions in which the power of Word or words to adequately represent religious reality has been denied. And he treated, critically and in depth, the various kinds of ineffability that a comparative philosophy of religions (especially a comparative philosophy of religions that recognizes the importance of psychology) must take seriously into account.

In the present volume José Cabezón addresses many of the same themes and carries the discussion forward in important and fascinating ways. As the title *Buddhism and Language* suggests, Cabezón shares with Scharfstein many of the same concerns with religion, with language, and with questions concern-

ing the capacity of language to express and to authenticate the realities that religious practitioners recognize and affirm. But the primary comparative lens that Cabezón chooses is different from the lens of ineffability; and the strategy he employs is one that eschews multiple examples in favor of an in-depth study of one particular tradition.

The comparative lens that Cabezón singles out for attention is the category of "scholasticism." This term was first identified as a significant comparative catagory by Paul Masson-Oursel, a scholar whose work in the first decades of the 1900s is one of the early harbingers of the kind of comparative philosophy of religions that this series is attempting to generate and nurture.* However in the more than seventy years since Masson-Oursel wrote his article explicitly devoted to the subject, very little has been done to pursue the ideas he set forth.

Picking up on Masson-Oursel's suggestion, Cabezón uses Chapter One of his text to spell out, in a highly sophisticated manner, a set of characteristics that he proposes to associate with the term *scholasticism.* In the process he emphasizes the ways in whichin the kind of contexts that he identifies as scholasticlanguage serves as a source of authority (e.g., in scripture), as the medium of expression, and as a central object for philosophical reflection. At another level, he points to different kinds of scholastic developments that have taken place in different historical contexts, particularly in India, in Tibet, and in the West.

Cabezón takes serious account of the structural differences between scholastic traditions and the significance of these differences for patterns of historical development. He notes, for example, that in the Buddhist traditions of India and Tibet scholasticism has always been associated with a specifically monastic environment. And this he contrasts with the situation in the Christian West where, during the medieval period, a separation took place between the scholasticism of

*See, for example, "La Scholastique," *Revue Philosophique de la France et de l'Etranger*, No. 90 (1920): 123-141.

the monastics, on the one hand, and the scholasticism of the clerics, on the other. Cabezón then goes on to contend that the consistently monastic environment of Buddhist scholasticism in India and Tibet is closely associated with the long-term continuity that has characterized that tradition. And he makes the correlated claim that the medieval separation of clerical scholasticism from the monastic environment provided the necessary preconditions for the development of the secularized styles of research and argument that have come to characterize our own work as humanist scholars in the modern academy.

To demonstrate the usefulness of the lens of scholasticism as a primary category in the comparative philosophy of religions, Cabezón chooses to focus the main body of his text on what Joachim Wach would have described as a "classical example."* The tradition that Cabezón selects as his classical example is that developed by the dGe lugs pa school of Tibetan Buddhism. This is a tradition that picks up on certain very central strands of the Mahayana * Buddhist scholasticism that developed in India during the first millennium A.D. and carries those strands forward to the present day.

Following through with the emphasis on language that Cabezón highlights in his initial characterization of scholasticism, he divides his discussion into two parts. In the first, he brilliantly investigates dGe lugs pa analyses of various aspects of language, scripture, and their relationship. In the second, he moves on to a profound exploration of the ways in which dGe lugs pa scholastics have affirmed and analyzed the potentialities of specifically philosophical language as a vehicle for articulating and defending Buddhist ontology and soteriology. In each of Cabezón's eight chapters he clarifies and deepens his presentation through the use of explicit comparisons with other scholastic traditions, primarilythough not exclusivelythe scholastic traditions of the West.

**Types of Religious Experience* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), Chapter 3, "The Concept of the 'Classical' in the Study of Religion," pp. 48-60.

In the final chapter of *Buddhism and Language*, Cabezón returns to his primary emphasis on the phenomenon of scholasticism. He summarizes the ways in which his study of dGe lugs pa scholasticism not only exemplifies, but also widens and refines, the characterization of scholasticism that he set forth at the outset of his study. In addition, he makes a number of specific suggestions concerning issues of religion and language that need to be further explored. And he points to a number of other scholastic traditions of various kinds that cry out for exploration by comparatively oriented philosophers of religion.

Cabezón's discussion will be of great interest to Buddhist scholars because it provides the most thorough and authoritative study of the orientation of one of the most philosophically sophisticated schools (some would say *the* most philosophically sophisticated school) that has emerged within the Buddhist tradition. At the same time, philosophers of religions, whatever their particular area of specialized study, will find that Cabezón has both identified a comparative category that is of fundamental importance for their discipline and provided a fascinating case study of a "classical example." It is my firm hope and expectation that Cabezón's innovative contribution will stimulate many further studies by philosophically oriented scholars who have specialized competence in other religious traditions in which scholasticism has played a significant and creative role.

INTRODUCTION

It was customary in classical Buddhist India to introduce a text by identifying its "purpose" and its "ultimate purpose." Traditionally, the purpose was considered to be the elucidation (literally, "the making known") of any one of a number of religio-philosophical subjects, and the ultimate purpose (sometimes called *the purpose of the purpose*) was usually identified as the attainment of the state of human perfection known as enlightenment (*bodhi*). This work has more modest goals. It has as its purpose the description of one tradition of Indo-Tibetan scholasticism, using language as a focus of inquiry. But it also has an ultimate purpose: there is a reason for my choosing this as my subject matter. I have focused on the issue of language in Indo-Tibetan Buddhist philosophy to make a case for the fact that scholasticism as a category can, as an abstract, decontextualized notion, profitably serve as a *topos* in the comparative philosophy of religion. Therefore, this study will have been successful, that is, its two purposes will have been fulfilled, if in its wake the reader (a) will have gained some under standing of the nature and concerns of the scholastic philosophy of Buddhist India and Tibet, (b) will come to accept that it is meaningful and insightful to speak of Indo-Tibetan Buddhist philosophy as "scholastic" in character, and (c) will agree that scholasticism, as an abstract and decontextualized category, is a useful theoretical construct in the cross-cultural study of philosophy.

I. The Limits of the Study

Language is an intimate part of human experience. So integral is it to us as a species that scholars, both ancient and modern, have gone so far as to define humanity in terms of the capacity to produce and understand language. 1 Dante, in his *De Vulgaris Eloquentia* puts it this way:

> for of all beings only to man was it granted to speak, since only for him was it necessary. It was not necessary for the angels or for the lower animals to speak; rather would it have been granted to them to no purpose, a thing which Nature certainly abhors doing.2

Given the pivotal nature of both language and religion to human life, it is not surprising that notice should have been taken of the interconnection between themthat language and religion should have been perceived as intimately related.3

Religion has, from very early times, been connected to language, at first unself-consciously, as the medium for the expression of religious concepts and sentiments (our oldest literature is religious in nature). Eventually, however, religion turned its attention reflectively to language per se.4 When this occurred and humankind, in the process of becoming self-consciously aware of itself and its modes of communication, turned its attention to those uncommon properties of the species (language being among these), religion was at the forefront of the enterprise.5

Buddhism is no exception to this rule.6 From the outset we find tremendous interest in language on the part of Buddhists and indeed, if the sources portray this accurately, on the part of the Buddha himself.7 The Buddha's interest in questions related to language in the early history of the religion, combined with the subsequent pressure on the tradition to respond to the opinions of rival schools concerning the nature and functioning of language, were probably major factors serving as an impetus for the creation of what was to become a long tradition of Buddhist speculation concerning language. Ultimately, however,

Buddhism's long-standing preoccupation with language throughout its history may be simply due to the fact that "any tradition that seeks mystical silence becomes intensely involved with the question of the role of language in religion," as Luis Oscar Gómez aptly puts it. 8

As with Buddhist thought as a whole, the Buddhist attitude toward language was something that developed and became more sophisticated (a skeptic might say simply more technical) with time. Arguably, this reaches its high point in the philosophical speculation of Buddhist scholasticism. Given the centrality of language to scholastic philosophy9 and given that one of the chief concerns of this book is to characterize Indo-Tibetan Buddhist philosophy *as* scholastic, it is not surprising that language should become the central focus and organizing principle of the work.

One possible tack in the study of Buddhist views toward language might be the "history of ideas" approach,10 tracing the development of different views of language by examining the diachronic development of these positions in extant scriptural and postcanonical material.11 However, because speculation about language is often only implicit in the texts,12 the process of constructing from these pieces a complete picture of the Buddhist views toward language, both historically and in its various manifestations (as scripture, as a source of doctrinal proof, as a source of knowledge generally, as the external equivalent of thought, and as the basic substratum of the world in the nominalist schools) is an intellectual undertaking of the greatest proportions. Given the state of Buddhist studies at the present time, where a vast amount of textual material remains to be explored and analyzed, such an approach is unrealistic. This, combined with the problem of achieving an accurate (even relative) chronology of Indian Buddhist textual material, makes such an approach unfeasible.

This study, then, opts for a different approach. Instead of attempting to document the entire history of Buddhist views toward language exhaustively, I have begun the journey at the end and worked my way backward through time. In taking the

dGe lugs pa school of Tibetan Buddhism 13 as a focal point for this study, I have begun my work with what is arguably the most sophisticated expression of Buddhist speculation regarding language. The dGe lugs pas refined the scholastic method of their Indian predecessors to a fine art and, as is fitting of a great scholastic tradition, were from their very founding preoccupied with questions concerning language, which is, by definition, the medium of the scholastic method.14

Although this study has as its major concern dGe lugs pa exegesis on language, it also draws on the writings of other Tibetan scholastics, for example, on the Sa skya scholars, Bu ston Rin chen grub (1290-1364), Rong ston Sakya* rgyal mtshan (1367-1449), and Go ram pa bSod nams seng ge (1429-1489) as well as on the rNying ma scholar, 'Ju Mi pham rgya mtsho (1846-1912). More important, I have relied very heavily on the Indian Buddhist sources that were most influential in the formation of Tibetan views on language. My approach, however, has been to take the dGe lugs pa school as the focus of inquiry, allowing *it* to motivate what Indian and Tibetan sources are examined. This has made the task of explaining Buddhist ideas concerning language more feasible and has allowed for a more in-depth treatment of the subject than could a general historical overview.

Is it possible, however, to gain a broad view of Buddhist scholasticism by allowing the philosophical preoccupations of a sectarian tradition to motivate the questions and sources examined? This, of course, depends on one's choice of schools, on the source material, and on the methodology employed in its treatment. It is of course possible that the nexus of questions generated by examining a particular school might be neither sufficient nor interesting. Obviously, a school that casts language in a negative lightthat presupposes, for example, a kind of radical ineffability (the claim that the ultimate truth and, according to some, any phenomenon cannot be expressed in words: that linguistic analysis is tantamount to bondage, the claim of *some* Zen schools)would not be the best vantage point from which to conduct such a study. It would be like attempting to gain a view of the New York skyline from one of those odious windows in large apartment buildings that open up to a brick wall.

The dGe lugs pa school, however, does not approach the theoretical study of language with a hermeneutic of suspicion; just the opposite. By choosing this school as the focus of the study we have selected a window on language, and therefore on Buddhist scholasticism, that allows for a broad and expansive view. Consideration of the nature and function of language has infiltrated every aspect of Buddhist philosophical speculation: from epistemology and ontology to hermeneutics. Given that one of the chief characteristics of the enterprise of Tsong kha pa (1357-1419), the founder of the dGe lugs pa school, is the attempt at systematization and synthesis of these different elements into a logical, self-consistent whole that does not contradict scripture a tour de force, to say the leastit is not surprising that in the works of the dGe lugs pa school we should find one of the most complete and sophisticated elucidations of language in all of Buddhist philosophical literature. In the works of this tradition 15 we witness the dGe lugs pa exegetes' attempts at creating a formal system that can account for the validity of scripture without the religious enterprise degenerating into dogmatism; at upholding the necessity of language and conceptual thought without denying the fact that these, like the proverbial raft, are ultimately to be left behind; at cogently arguing for a philosophically nominalist viewpoint that does not become a form of ontological nihilism; at protecting from the assault of rival schools their logical method, all the while aware of its limits; and at defending their system of meditation that, especially at the early stages of the path, is believed to rely heavily on discursive analysis. Hence, there is no doubt that an examination of language from a dGe lugs pa perspective provides us with a plethora of both important and interesting questions for analysis.

II. The Plan of the Study

This book is roughly divided into three parts. Chapter One problematizes the general notion of scholasticism, setting forth a theoretical framework for understanding it as an abstract and "decontextualized"16 category. The following eight chapters

demonstrate how some of these general characteristics of scholasticism are played out in the particular Indo-Tibetan Buddhist case. In this way the bulk of the book becomes a demonstration of how the theoretical constructs developed in Chapter One are exemplified in one significant non-European case.

Chapters Two through Five examine the soteriological aspects of language, which is to say those aspects of language that, more than any other, are taken to act as a source of salvation. Under this heading we investigate the phenomenon of scripture (its nature, the theory and practice of its interpretation, and the authority with which it has been invested). In recent years there has been a great deal of interest in the subject of scripture as a major comparative and thematic topic in religious studies. 17 Although there has been a great deal of work on the question of scripture in comparative perspective,18 and although among these are several works that focus on the Pali sources,19 no work of a systematic nature dealing with the question of scripture in Mahayana* Buddhism has yet appeared.20 Although the present study does not deal with the Mahayana* view of the nature and function of scripture in a general way, the first four chapters do discuss some of the central issues concerning scripture that are most relevant to one strand of Buddhist scholasticism. As is the case with their views on language in general, the dGe lugs pas' views on scripture are in many ways the most sophisticated expression of Mahayana* scholastic views on the nature and function of holy writ. Hence, they provide us with a very important, albeit unilateral, perspective on scripture in Mahayana* Buddhism.

Each of Chapters Six through Nine focuses on a single philosophical issue. In Chapter Six we explore how language and what is perceived to be its psychological concomitant, conceptual thought, are upheld as modes of knowledge. Chapter Seven, focusing on the controversy concerning a form of logical syllogism called the *svatantra*, shows how the dGe lugs pas defend the view that formal21 logic can and does operate at the conventional level. Language and its relationship to existence is the subject of Chapter Eight. There we examine how this tradition

has defended the position of nominalism as the middle way between the two ontological extremes of nihilism and eternalism. Finally, in Chapter Nine we shall see how the dGe lugs pas' hermeneutical strategies are stretched to their limits as they repudiate the literal interpretation of the claims of ineffability that fill the corpus of Buddhist literature (both canonical and extracanonical).

Chapter Ten, the conclusion, rehearses in more detail how some of the characteristics of scholasticism in the abstract are expressed in the Indo-Tibetan Buddhist tradition and suggests directions for future research.

III. Three Positions Antithetical to dGe lugs pa Scholasticism

Controversy and polemic is part of the very warp and woof of scholasticism. If scholasticism represents the culmination of a process of religious "intellectualization," a claim that B. B. Price makes of Medieval Christian thought, it should not be surprising to find that, as this process gave rise to a variety of formulations of the religious message, a considerable amount of scholastic energy should have been directed at defending one intellectual systematization of doctrine over another. In the context of Europe the subjects of these debates are well known. They dealt with such issues as the ontological status of universals, the distinction between substance and attributes, the nature of change and motion, the relative reliability of sense consciousness and the intellect, the scope of human knowledge and the authority of the Aristotelian corpus. Although some of these same issues became objects of controversy in India and China (viz. the nature of universals and the relationship between substance and quality, respectively), South and East Asian scholastics were often concerned with questions that were very different, both from Europe and from each other. Be that as it may, identifying key polemical issues is an essential prerequisite to understanding a scholastic tradition. Let us consider briefly then what some of these issues were for the Tibetan scholastics that are our principal objects of study.

To understand the dGe lugs pas' attitudes toward language it is necessary to understand something about the philosophical positions they viewed as rival theories. Tsong kha pa and his followers identify three major doctrinally misguided intellectual currents prevalent in their day. All three are regarded as forms of skepticism or nihilism by the dGe lugs pas; all of them are intimately related to language; and all are seen as challenges to the scholastic enterprise in which they are engaged. It is often the case that the three are conflated and portrayed as the view of a single opponent, something that is clearly not the case historically. 22

The first is considered by them to be a form of quietism, which they considered a kind of soteriological nihilism. It has been variously called *the view of Hva shang"*23 or *the view that nothing is to be thought of* (*ci yang yid la mi byed pa'i lta ba*). As described by the dGe lugs pas, it maintains that discursive and analytical forms of meditation, if valid at all, are but expedients to lead the adept to the supreme form of meditation in which all thought is to be eliminated, the mind resting in the peacefulness of no-thought.24

Another position repeatedly criticized by dGe lugs pa authors is a form of epistemological skepticism, a view that challenges the validity of conceptual and linguistic knowledge.25 From a cognitive perspective, this view criticizes the validity of logical inference; it mistakes the Prasangika* critique of the *svatantra* form of reasoning for a critique of syllogistic reasoning in general,26 and at its most extreme it repudiates the possibility of valid knowledge (pramana*, *tshad ma*) altogether.27 On the linguistic side, it upholds the doctrine of radical ineffability: that nothing can be predicated of anything else, that all descriptions of emptiness are useless, being equally distant from the ultimate; as a methodological corollary it maintains that the Prasangika* Madhyamaka, from the dGe lugs pa perspective the only completely valid exposition of the doctrine of emptiness, holds no philosophical position whatsoever.28

Finally, the dGe lugs pas criticize a form of radical onto-logical nihilism known to them as *the view that things are nei-*

ther existent nor nonexistent (*yod min med min kyi lta ba*). According to this view, the Madhyamaka critique is to be carried out in regard to existence, causality, and so forth *in general* without the need to affix the qualifier *ultimately,* that is, without it being necessary to qualify what is being repudiated as "ultimate" existence, or "true" causality. 29 This view derives from a literal interpretation of certain passages in the Madhyamaka literature that, on the surface, repudiate the law of noncontradiction.30

Tsong kha pa and later dGe lugs pa scholars have been consistent in claiming that these views are mutually related. If they had ever been confronted with the fact that probably no one historical figure held all of these views, they most likely would have answered that, whether or not they are ever found to be historically exemplified within the philosophy of a single school or individual, the views are nonetheless mutual corrollaries of each other *in the logical sphere.* If nothing exists, they would say, nothing can be said to exist as anything else (that is, a man cannot be said to exist as an impermanent thing, for example), and if this is the case, nothing can be said *to be* anything else (predication is impossible), reducing one to the view of radical ineffability. What is more, if nothing exists and if nothing can be said or known, what method of meditation would be more appropriate than the emptying of the mind? The connection between these three views, they would claim, is obvious.

We have structured our discussions within each of the main thematic areas described earlier (scripture, epistemology, logic, ontology, and the question of ineffability) so as to characterize the dGe lugs pas' views toward language, exemplary as they are of the concerns of Buddhist scholastic philosophy. Our task has also been, however, to demonstrate the currents in *Indian* Buddhist thought concerning language that most influenced the dGe lugs pa synthesis. However, our goal has been to go beyond a mere descriptive analysis of the dGe lugs pa position and its sources by analyzing the dialectical tensions that existed between the dGe lugs pa and other currents of thought popular

in Tibet at the time (whether real or imagined). The fact that these rival theories are perceived as departures from the Indian tradition motivates the dGe lugs pas to turn to the specific Indian sources that they do. Hence, another aim of this study is to demonstrate that reliance upon a particular set of Indian texts was not an accident, nor was it a decision that occurred in a vacuum. Instead, it will become obvious that the choice of Indian texts and the particular way in which they were read was a conscious response to certain views that may have been prevalent in Tibet, views that the dGe lugs pas considered to be forms of soteriological and ontological nihilism, and epistemological skepticism. Any project that seeks to examine an issue such as language in a scholastic philosophical tradition must, it seems to me, describe the views of the particular school, discuss the sources upon which such a system is based, but more important it must explain why particular sources were relied upon and why those sources were read in the way they were. 31

As I mentioned at the outset, this study does not have as its aim the exposition of attitudes toward language in Buddhism as a whole. Instead it proposes to discuss those movements in the intellectual history of Buddhism that influenced *one school* of Buddhist thought (the dGe lugs pa school of Tibetan Buddhism) in its attitudes toward language. It is my hope that this albeit limited contribution adds in some small measure to our knowledge of the Buddhist views of language, an area of study that is one of the most unexplored and, for me, one of the most fascinating subjects of investigation in the field of Buddhist studies. But more important, it is my hope that by examining Indo-Tibetan scholastic views on language light may be shed on the very nature of scholasticism as a general comparative category in the philosophy of religion.

Chapter 1
Scholasticism

When you hear that something you do not know is like something you do know, you know them both.
From the later Mohist Canons 1

How does one go about arguing for scholasticism as a general and cross-cultural category in the history of philosophy? Like religion, scholasticism is an English word with Latin roots. It is a construct of the Euro-American academy.2 But whereas the word *religion* has been used broadly to describe a variety of phenomena across cultures, *scholasticism* has rarely been used as anything but an appellation for a medieval European intellectual movement. For it to be more broadly construed, scholasticism would have to undergo the same process of abstraction and decontextualization that has led to the more general construal of the category of religion. Let us, therefore, begin our discussion by rehearsing what this process of abstraction entails and the role comparison plays in it.

The study of religion in Europe and America, as paradigmatic of the human sciences, has evolved through a process of abstraction that is twofold. On the one hand, there has been a move away from the particular to the general and universal. On the other, there has been a tendency to objectifyto make the object of critical reflectionwhat was previously a lived-through world-view. Among other things, it was abstraction in the first sense of the word that led European intellectuals, especially from the time of the Enlightenment on, to seriously recognize

the existence of other religions, and then, under the influence of the deistic notion of "natural religion," to an abstract and universal concept of religion itself. 3 But simultaneously operative was abstraction in the second sense of the word. This led first to self-critical reflection on the very notion of religion, what might be called the *focus on method*, and eventually to a second-order analysis (reflection on that reflection), that is, to the study of method, or methodology. Together, these two forms of abstraction have given rise to two of the most prominent characteristics of postmodernism: a pluralistic consciousness and the focus on theory. In the study of religion this tendency has manifested itself in two ways: in a greater emphasis on comparison as a method for gaining knowledge,4 and in a greater preoccupation (one might almost say obsession) with methodology.

We shall have more to say later concerning abstraction in the second sense of the word, that is, as objectification, and of the type of secondary discourse to which it gives rise; but it is abstraction in the first sense of the word that is of immediate interest here. The history of the study of religion has also been witness to the fact that, like the notion of religion itself, other related phenomena have come to be similarly "universalized." Hence, over the years a variety of foci of varying usefulness have emerged in the study of comparative religion and philosophy: deity, pilgrimage, ritual, and more recently virtue and scripture, to name just a few.

It need hardly be stated that the abstraction of these categories through comparative analysis yields new insights, raising as it does new questions for the traditions being examined, questions that would (and perhaps could) never be raised otherwise. It is the aim of this study to suggest another abstract and general category in the comparative study of religion and philosophy: scholasticism. The ultimate purpose of this work is to suggest that scholasticism be freed from its parochial European usage and instead be treated cross-culturally. The body of the work explores Indo-Tibetan Buddhist notions regarding the nature and use of language, both as scripture and as medium of expression generally. But this more specific aspect of the study, focused as it is on language and concentrating on the dGe lugs

pa synthesis, must be understood in context, for if the elements of the Indo-Tibetan philosophical tradition examined here are in some significant sense "scholastic," this implies the more abstract idea of scholasticism, a more general notion of which the specific indo-Tibetan case is an example. In this way, the examination of a particular non-Western case is meant to serve as support for the fact that the notion of scholasticism can be extended in a meaningful and interesting way to describe a family of intellectual movements that are present in other cultures.

I am not suggesting here that the concept of scholasticism as it is understood in its parochial usage, as nomenclature for a medieval European philosophical movement, be applied as *it stands* to other non-Western traditions. Such a suggestion would be imperialistic at best, requiring the contortion of the other in the service of a dubious theoretical goal. Instead, the comparative method, as I see it, requires that the category under discussionhere, the notion of scholasticismbe itself transformed in the process of abstraction. Comparison is a dialectical process in which the category under analysis becomes refined; and this very process of refinement suggests new questions of the tradition from which the category, in its original and particular form, emerged. 5 This, it seems to me, is how comparison operates in yielding new and interesting knowledge.6

A perusal of even the most recent literature in the field of religious studies makes it clear that *scholasticism* as a term has rarely been applied outside of a medieval European context.7 The term is almost never used to describe the traditions that we find, at some point or another, in the intellectual history of most of the literate religious and philosophical traditions of the world. In the rare cases when it is so used it is often used uncritically, as if the abstract category of "scholasticism" had already been established on firm methodological footing.8 More often than not, however, the term *scholasticism* has failed to be used in this more global sense at all. What is more, this myopia has resulted in a lacuna in the cross-cultural study of religion. It has meant that an essential *topos* in the comparative history of ideas has been all but overlooked. Interestingly, an exception to this shortsightedness is found in the work of P. Masson-Oursel, ar-

guably the founder of the modern discipline of comparative philosophy. 9 Masson-Oursel's vision of comparative philosophy in general, and of scholasticism in particular, evinces the Enlightenment ideal of achieving in the human sciences the kind of objectivity and impartiality perceived to be paradigmatic of the natural sciences. To the modern reader his goal of achieving objective, impersonal laws through the use of the comparative method may seem naive and outdated, but there is great insight and novelty in the work of Masson-Oursel. In his now forgotten essay, "La Scholastique,"10 he argues precisely for a general notion of scholasticism:

> If scholasticism represents an episode, whether accidental or necessary, of our civilization, one that emerges out of the Greco-Roman world, we must resign ourselves only to describing it, without hope of ever defining it. But if the data that, in one way or another, evoke our notion of scholasticism, are to be found in other civilizations, it becomes incumbent upon us to confront this diverse order of facts with the firm goal of observing as much the similarities as the differences. The hypothesized phenomenon will, due to a certain generality, reveal itself in that case, as the essential elements are made to appear throughout the diversity of the contingent facts. Taking history as a basis, we shall rise above it, and shall bring to light a notable aspect of mental life.11

That scholasticism can be exactly defined by uncovering its essential qualities is of course problematic. Moreover, later in the same essay it becomes clear that Masson-Oursel advocates a kind of historical determinism that, far from allowing for the emergence of scholasticism as a contingent fact, conceives of the global emergence of scholasticism as necessary. Not only is scholasticism a necessary stage in "the evolution of civilizations," but there is for Masson-Oursel a synchronicity to its emergence, so that it arises approximately at the same time in each civilization. This is no mere accident, for scholasticism always emerges as a response to what he calls *sophism.*12 Whereas the latter is a period of chaotic creativity, without order and discipline, the former represents the systematization of sophism through the use of logic and categorization. Because Buddhism, for Masson

Oursel, is a quintessential example of sophism, he considers it a forerunner to scholasticism, a move that prohibits him from ever seriously considering the possibility of a Buddhist scholastic tradition. Finally, Masson-Oursel considers the break from a scholastic mentality to be essential to the development of a scientific and critical perspective. In this sense he buys into a Hegelian evolutionism that sees the West as superior, and he awaits the day when Asian civilizations will disengage themselves from the scholastic world-view to "awaken from their dogmatic slumber." 13 Such are the limitations of Masson-Oursel's work, but these do not completely vitiate its usefulness. Despite his essentialism, despite his commitment to a historical evolutionism, and despite his Hegelian Eurocentricity, his characterization of scholasticism remains in many ways insightful and interesting.

In setting forth his theory of what constitutes the scholastic world-view he identifies certain key features that, even iffrom our post-Wittgensteinian perspective they cannot be considered universal, must nonetheless be considered central to the characterization of what constitutes the phenomenon of scholasticism. These include scholasticism's formal nature, its systematicity, its preoccupation with scriptures and their exegesis in commentaries, its rationalism and its reliance on logic and dialectics in defense of its tenets, its penchant for lists, classification and categorization, and its tendency toward abstraction:

> If scholasticism is a teaching that bases its authority in the words of a sacred text, interpreted by a corps of professionals dedicated both to establishing and defending a religious truth, and to that end rely on formal and discursive reasoning, it is exemplary of a stage in civilization of which our own Middle Ages cannot be considered the only example.14

What is more, Masson-Oursel is ahead of his time in his keen awareness of the fact that the comparative process is a dialectical one that raises new questions of indigenous conceptual structures: "Taking for granted then that there exist Oriental scholasticisms, we must then ask ourselves about their characteristics so as to determine the extent to which these latter (factors)

are found in European scholasticism." 15 In brief, Masson-Ottrsel's studies, even if encumbered by the limitations described previously, nonetheless show sparks of genius; and it is to his credit that he was the first to suggest the thesis that scholasticism should be considered a "notable aspect of mental life" across cultures.

How then can the phenomenon of scholasticism be more broadly construed? Of course, this process has already begun, for European medievalists have had to generalize the notion of scholasticism at least to the point where the term could be applied meaningfully as nomenclature for a variety of philosophical movements that were both historically and religiously disparate, including not only Christian, but also Jewish and Muslim, philosophical speculation. Broadly speaking, the decontextualization effectuated by scholars of medieval European scholasticism can be classified into two groups: those that aim at creating an abstract notion of scholasticism based on similarities in the *content* of scholastic speculation, and those that are based on similarities in the scholastic *method.* De Wulf, for example, believed that all scholastics were essentially concerned with the same types of questions; that is, for de Wulf, what characterized scholasticism as a movement was a similarity in philosophical content. This he identified as their acceptance of a series of postulates that included the existence of God, God's role as creator, and the objectivity of human knowledge.16 Grabmann, Knowles, and others, however, have tended to see the movement as achieving the kind of unity that one would expect of a coherent intellectual tradition more because of similarities in method than because of identity of subject matter.17 These latter scholars then tend to see scholasticism as a movement that, although not exhibiting a uniformity of content, nonetheless exhibits a uniformity of approach: concern with harmonizing scriptural authority and reason, with apologetics, with the application of Aristotle's logic to religious questions, and with the use of dialectics. We shall return to this issue in the Conclusion. For now, suffice it merely to point out this divergence of views. Though this first step in the process of creating the abstract category of "scholasticism" in a medieval European setting is helpful, it does not go far enough for the purpose of this study, which is comparative in a much broader sense.

In a Christian context, the "scholastic" has often been contrasted with the "monastic." Jean Leclerq 18 and others have documented the fact that in the twelfth century there existed two distinct forms of education in Christian Europe: schools for clerics and schools for monks. The former were concerned primarily with training clerics in the liberal arts and scholastic theology, preparing them for the "active life." The latter were the training ground for boys destined for the monastic life. Monastic training, according to Leclerq, was more individual. It took place under the guidance of an abbot and had a contemplative bent that was missing in the scholastic training of clerics. This is not to say that monastic theology was unaware of, or opposed to, the scholastic method taught in the schools for clerics. Rather, monastic learning stressed, in addition to intellectual understanding, an inner, experiential, and mystical dimension, "a personal, subjective element, which provided the point of departure for further reflection."19 Attempts at reconciling the rational "scholastic" method with this experiential dimension were seen as early as the eleventh century, with the figure of Anselm of Cantebury, who has been called the father of Christian scholasticism. In his masterful study, *The Implications of Literacy,* Brian Stock underscores the extent to which Anselm was himself the synthesis of "monastic" and "scholastic" ways of thinking:

> He fervently believed in prayer, mysticism, and supreme values; yet he pursued logic, factuality and the resolution of opposed views.... Anselm, for his part, had bridged the monastic and scholastic realms by suggesting that the establishment of logico-linguistic facts was not incompatible with deep personal meditation on religious mysteries. He effectively reconciled the objectifying and subjectifying aspects of critical investigation within one literary endeavor.20

We shall return shortly to this particular trait of scholasticism; namely, the felt need to reconcile the rational and experiential aspects of religion. However, it is interesting to note, by way of contrast, that the scholastic method in Europe eventually gave way to another form of inquiry, one less concerned with the experiential and practical implications of rational inquiry. By

the twelfth century a new method of philosophical and theological thinking was emergingone that attempted to dissociate itself from the inner, experiential dimensions of monastic education and practice, focusing instead on

> the abstract idea of information, that is, of factual knowledge, (which) was gradually separated from the individual understanding. A difference was recognized between the knower as inquiring subject and the knowledge which was the object of his investigations. Unlike the eastern "wise man" and the early medieval sage, the twelfth century intellectual did not embody a subject personally, he taught it. Being an intellectual was a profession, even a social role. 21

George Steiner has described, in *Real Presences*,22 transitions of the kind just mentioned, and has explored the implications of this to the present situation in the academy. Steiner bemoans the fact that humanistic scholarship has distanced itself so thoroughly from primary sources, obsessed as it is with secondary discourse, the "editorial-critical discourse on discourse." More important, he believes that there is a continuity between our present state of affairs and the scholastic mode of inquiry.23

When Stock and Steiner are taken together the implication is that modem scholarly praxis in the humanities represents the secularization of what is an essentially religious method: scholasticism as a mode of philosophical and theological reflection. First, the experiential and practical relevance of rational inquiry is lost, giving rise to the figure of the "intellectual" and to disembodied knowledge for its own sake. The trend culminates, in the Enlightenment, with the secularization of scholasticism, so that the religious nature of the inquiry gives way to more "naturalistic" explanations. Eventually, of course, this leads to secular secondary discourse as the paradigm of Western academic and scholarly inquiry, the situation that Steiner so abhors.

The depersonalization and eventual secularization of scholastic philosophical discourse, what Henderson calls "the transition from commentarial forms and modes of discourse to modern scholarship and criticism," as Masson-Oursel himself points out, is not of course a global trend. It never occurred in Buddhism, for example.24 Why is this so? Is it in part due to the fact

that the scholastic-monastic distinction, as it has been formulated by scholars of Christian scholasticism, is unknown in the Buddhist context? In the Buddhism of India and Tibet there was, as is well known, never a distinction between monk and cleric. Indeed, there was never a clergy apart from the order of monks and nuns. Whether for this reason or for other more complex ones that involve more basic religious presuppositions and world-view, 25 the philosophical and "theological" reflection of Indo-Tibetan Buddhism saw neither a scholastic-monastic split, nor a scholastic-secular one. Buddhist scholasticism was a monastic movement, and it neither transformed into, nor did it ever give rise to, a tradition of secular criticism.

Not all forms of scholasticism, even some that never saw this move to secular-critical scholarship, are of course monastic; neither rabinnic, nor Islamic, nor neo-Confucian scholasticism is, for example, this. And yet it might be argued that scholasticism, whether monastic or not, is concerned with reconciling the rational and the experiential aspects of human religiousness. In some cases (Buddhism, Christianity, and certain movements within Islam) this experiential dimension involves the transformation of the individual through inner contemplative practice. In other cases (Judaism, Confucianism, and perhaps Mimamsa Hinduism) the experiential dimension has more to do with the transformation of the individual and society through the practice of ritual, moral principles and laws, that is, through action. But scholastic traditions generally share this common concern: that experience and action be guided and justified by reasoning and that rationally justified doctrine be made experientially relevant. According to Wing-tsit Chan, for example, it was precisely the fact that the philosophical position of the Chinese Logicians (Hui Shih and Kung-sun Lung) "represented an interest in knowledge for its own sake, an interest not at all in harmony with the keen interest in life of Taoism, Confucianism and Moism"26 that led to the sustained criticism of the Logicians by the latter schools and to the demise of Chinese "intellectualism" almost in its infancy. Scholastics seem willing to sacrifice neither the rational nor the experiential dimensions of human religiousness, and this leads, at least in the Indo-Tibetan tradition,

to a tension that manifests itself repeatedly and in a variety of interesting ways, as we shall see.

Over and above the mere synthesis of experience and reason, however, many scholastic movements would go one step further, claiming that reasoning and systematicity, far from being incompatible with personal religious experience, are the very *pierequisites* for spiritual realization and action. The reasons for this commitment to rational and systematic inquiry obviously vary from one scholastic tradition to the next. For example, the presupposition that a rational Creator is both worth knowing and knowable through rational means may represent a reason for rational and systematic inquiry in some theistic traditions that finds no counterpart in nontheistic cases. Despite these differences, however, four factors generally seem to drive scholastic traditions toward rationalism and systematicity.

The first is the basic intelligibility of the universe. Scholastics maintain in general that, whether or not *everything* is intelligible (and some *do* advocate even this stronger notion), at the very least everything that is of soteric importance is understandable through rational inquiry. Reality, for the scholastics, is accessible, and though the rational-conceptual knowledge of reality may not always be the highest form of understanding, being superseded by intuitive knowledge, or in some instances by action, it is nonetheless a prerequisite to the latter.

Second, scholastic movements are highly tradition oriented. They have a strong sense of history 27 and lineage and are committed to the preservation of the tradition. Now to preserve tradition certainly means to preserve the spirit of the tradition as it is expressed in experience and action. Insofar as the practical-experiential dimension of tradition is determined by the rational dimensionthat is, in so far as experience is conditioned by doctrine, understood rationallyto preserve the tradition means to preserve its intellectual underpinnings, rational inquiry into doctrine. There is no better way to ensure that what an adept experiences is particularly Christian or Buddhist, or that the way in which an adept behaves is particularly Confucian or Jewish, than to ensure that the "experiencer" has had a strong foundation in his or her respective intellectual tradition.

Likewise, from a de facto perspective, it is the rational-conceptual assessment of an experience or behaviorits consistency with scripture, oral tradition, and reasoningthat legitimizes it as "orthodox."

Not only was rational inquiry perceived as essential to the preservation of the tradition's self-identity, it was also considered essential to *distinguishing* that tradition from others, to *defending* it against the intellectual assaults of others, and to *demonstrating* its relative superiority to others. Although the art of interreligious polemics has been all but lost today, 28 it was very much a part of the intellectual life of scholastics.

Finally, scholastics are usually dealing with large quantities of disparate textual material that is often contradictory. Part of their self-imposed task is to synthesize this material into an ordered whole. In so doing, one option would be to ignore a portion of this textual material, that is, to work with an abbreviated corpus of texts, and this is not unknown. When this tack is taken, reason comes into play in choosing what will be discarded and systematicity in the exposition of the material that remains. On the whole, however, scholastics tend toward the proliferative. More textually inclusive than exclusive, they prefer to analyze and systematize rather than to limit what is at their disposal. Hence, rational inquiry and systematicity becomes necessary from a textual standpoint as well.

Scholastic rationalism operates in large part to justify religious beliefs as expressed in doctrine. This, combined with what I have called the generally *proliferative* character of scholasticism as a movement, means that, in principle, there is for scholastics no end to the rational process. It is always possible for an opponent, real or imagined, to demand a reason, that is, to require that a particular doctrinal assertion be justified; and for the scholastic there is never any theoretical ground for denying the validity of such a request.29 To say that scholastics are rationalists is in part to say that they are ever willing to answer an opponent's "why?"

I claimed earlier that in the human sciences in general, and in the study of religion in particular, abstraction has been operative in two ways, in a universalizing or generalizing mode

and in the sense of objectification. To abstract, in this latter sense, means to make an object of what was previously a presupposition for the purpose of critical self-reflection. Although the clamor of humanistic disciplines today, such methodological self-reflection was not unknown to the scholastics. Indeed, if many of our present concerns as scholars in the academy are byproducts of our common medieval scholastic heritage, it may well be that scholasticism's concern with abstraction and critical self-reflection is one source of much contemporary scholarship. Be that as it may, it seems clear that at the very least scholastics share this common concern with critical self-reflection, that is, with abstraction in this second sense of the word.

Scholasticism is proliferative in three ways: textually (opting for inclusion rather than exclusion of the textual material that is to act as object of reflection), rationally (forever willing to entertain new arguments), and epistemologically (insofar as it is concerned with understanding many, and in some cases *all*, phenomena). But scholasticism is itself a phenomenon, making it natural for scholastics to eventually turn their attention to their own tradition. Convinced of the importance of rational inquiry, scholastic philosophers then commit themselves to applying this very method critically *to their own enterprise*, not simply for the sake of self-understanding, but because the scholastic method itself had to be justified to others, defended against rival theories of philosophical speculation, and in this way established on firm footing. This self-reflective quality of scholastic speculation is equally important to understanding it as a coherent movement in the history of ideas.

Artists utilize a variety of media, and for the scholastic the medium is language. In its manifestation as scripture it is the source of scholastic speculation. But language is also the scholastics' own medium of expression, and of course it is the subject of a great deal of their own speculation. Understanding this threefold character of languagescriptural language as source, philosophical language as medium, and language in general as the object of reflectionis essential to the understanding of scholasticism as a phenomenon.

I use the term *scripture* here in a very broad sense that refers to all of the authoritative texts of a tradition. My notion of scripture excludes neither religiously relevant classical texts, nor commentaries that have achieved authoritative status, nor established lineages of oral explanation. To say that scripture is a source of scholastic speculation is, in part, to reiterate the point that scholasticism is tradition oriented, for the textual corpus in part defines a tradition. I hesitate to identify scripture here with canon because the textual sources of the scholastics is often much broader than their formal canons. It is not unusual, for example, for certain scholastic texts themselves to gain greater prestige and authority than any canonical work. But whether it be canon or the more all-encompassing notion of scripture I am suggesting here, it is this material that serves as a major source of philosophical speculation. What is more, scholastic philosophical speculation is, at least in theory, bound by scripture, in the sense that it can never go beyond it or against it. Philosophical speculation can never go *beyond* scripture because scripture is complete. There is nothing worth saying that has not already been said before. Philosophical speculation cannot go *against* scripture because scripture is inerrant, that is, true in its entirety. This being said, it is amazing how clever exegetes can, to paraphrase Jonathan Z. Smith, extricate themselves from the self-imposed limit that is a canon and thereby effectively go both beyond and against scripture, regardless of the rhetoric to the contrary.

Not only are individual scriptures a *source* of scholastic speculation, in the act of commentary or exegesis, but scripture as a whole is often its *object.* The tendency to self-reflection is equally operative in regard to this source of tradition as it is in regard to the tradition itself. Hence, scholastics ask themselves, what makes something scripture, what makes scripture authoritative, how can the authority of texts be reconciled with the spirit of rational inquiry, and what is the nature and limits of scriptural authority? They ask themselves not only what scripture means, but what it means to mean, and how the rules for extracting meaning from scripture are to be systematized and

rationally justified. All of these are, of course, meta-questions that are concerned more with scripture as a category, as object of reflection, than with scripture as source of reflection.

Likewise, scholastics are all too aware that they are engaged in a philosophical task that involves the distinctive use of language, logic, and conceptual thought. When they reflect on *this* self-critically, it leads them to theorize on the methods, goals, and limits of philosophical inquiry and on the nature and workings of language and conceptual thought. Logic is the formal method of the scholastics, the framework that undergirds their rationalism. James A. Weisheipl has called logic "the chief instrument of scholastic training." 30 It is not surprising, therefore, that many scholastics should have been preoccupied with the workings of syllogistic reasoning and its role in philosophical discourse. But logical argumentation, and indeed philosophy itself, is expressed linguistically and understood conceptually. Concomitant with an interest in logic, therefore, is a general interest in the workings of language. Do words refer to real entities or abstract ones? If the latter, what is the ontological status of these abstract entities? Language also functions to generate conceptual knowledge. But how does it do so? What *is* conceptual knowledge? How is it related to sense perception? And most important, perhaps, can language and conceptual thought depict and understand reality? This last issue is of the utmost importance, for unless a case can be made for the effective use of language and conceptual thought, the tradition remains forever indefensible, and more important, inaccessible to future generations.

The characteristics of scholasticism just discussed have been couched in a rhetoric that assumes the scholastic enterprise to be monolithic, as if every scholastic tradition partook of all of these attributes. To have done otherwise would have meant qualifying the discussion at every turn, pointing out exceptions to every "rule." However, it is not my intention here to suggest that these characteristics form some sort of essential core to scholasticism, which is after all one of the limitations of Masson-Oursel's own approach. In the words of a leading European medievalist, "the features identified as common for scholasti-

cism and scholastics often seem elusive, or too trivial to carry the weight of a complex intellectual movement." 31 When this is so of the European case, there can of course be little hope of arriving at a definition of the more general cross-cultural category, at least if this entails arriving at some common core of qualities shared by all scholastic traditions. We shall find, instead, that some of the traits identified above may be more prevalent in some traditions than in others. Some that may be altogether missing in some cultures may be central to the scholasticism of others. I am suggesting, of course, that these characteristics should be taken rather as resemblances among the family of movements we label *scholastic* than as the essential traits that all forms of scholasticism must share. With a phenomenon as complex as scholasticism any essentialistic approach at definition will obviously fail.

In the pages that follow we shall see how each of these various features of scholasticism are played out in the specific Indo-Tibetan case. If the Indo-Tibetan scholastic tradition is paradigmatic of the more general phenomenon of scholasticism, then we should be able to see in the latter, as we can in the former, a concern with scripture, language, logic, and reasoning. We should be able to see Indo-Tibetan scholasticism as a movement that focuses on language, especially in its scriptural manifestation, as a necessary source for spiritual insight; that it is intensely preoccupied both with the theory and the practice of its interpretation. Methodologically, it should be seen to be critical, rationalist, and intensely self-reflective in tone, feeling a deep need to legitimize its own rational-critical approach. To that end, it should attempt to establish language, conceptual thought and logic on a firm footing and reject the attempts of those who would repudiate the communicative abilities of linguistic expression and the epistemic power of reason.

The Latin West's preoccupation with incorporating Aristotle into religious scholarship is obviously one of the idiosyncratic features of European scholasticism. Likewise, many of the characteristics of the specifically Indo-Tibetan expression of scholasticism that the reader comes across in the following pages will, in the long run, be found to be uniquely Buddhist. Many, how-

ever, will be shared by other traditions. Only continued cross-cultural investigation will allow us to map out the pattern of family resemblances that we expect to find if the category of "scholasticism" is a useful one. These family resemblances, how-ever, will be gleaned only through the systematic investigation of particular historical traditions. If I have one single hope for the present work it is that it will spark this type of investigation, encouraging scholars of different religio-philosophical traditions to give thought to what, in their own geographical and cultural setting, it might mean to say that a particular movement is *scholastic*.

SECTION I
LANGUAGE AND SCRIPTURE

Chapter 2
The Nature of Doctrine: The Buddha's Word and Its Transcendence

*It may be, Ananda *, that some of you will think The word of the Teacher is a thing of the past; we have now no Teacher'. But that, Ananda*, is not the correct view. The doctrine and discipline, Ananda*, which I have taught and enjoined upon you is to be your teacher when I am gone.1*
From the Mahaparinibbana* Sutta of the Digha* Nikaya*.

The Torah and the Holy One, Blessed be He, are entirely one.
Zohar, *Tikun 30*

What is the nature of scripture and where does it reside? What is the stuff out of which holy words are made? What is its locus? These questions have preoccupied the scholastic philosophers and theologians from a variety of traditions. Philosophers that share the scholastic mind-set, even though they may share entirely different doctrinal presuppositions, have been particularly fascinated with the question of the nature of sacred texts, or scripture, and have attempted to "locate" it in various and sundry "places."

If the writings of scholastic philosophers are examined cross-culturally it becomes evident that the questions of the nature and locus of scripture become pressing because of the need to

ease what is perceived to be a tension between the immanence and transcendence of holy writ. Scripture is obviously present in the world, sharing many of the mundane characteristics of secular works. At the same time scripture is considered sacred, that is, beyond the world. Essential to identifying the nature and locus of scripture is the reconciliation of the mundane and supramundane qualities of holy words.

In the *Likutei Amarim*, an eighteenth century work of the Chabad or Lubavitch sect of Chassidism, the work of Schneur Zalman, we find a notion common in Jewish mysticism, namely that scripture (the Hebrew Bible) is of the same nature as God:

> When a man utters a word, the breath emitted in speaking is something that can be sensed and perceived as a thing apart, separated from its source, namely the ten faculties of the soul itself. But with the Holy One, blessed be He, His speech is not, heaven forfend, separated from His blessed Self, for there is nothing outside of Him, and there is no place outside of Him. 2

However, because God is beyond the realm of thought, God has sent down God's word in a more gross form that is amenable to human understanding:

> Thence [the Torah] has progressively descended through hidden stages, stage after stage, with the descent of the worlds, until it clothed itself in corporeal substances and in things of this world, comprising almost all of the commandments of the Torah, their laws, and in the combination of the material letters, written with ink in a book, namely the 24 volumes of the Torah, Prophets and Hagiographa; all this in order that every thought should be able to apprehend them.3

It is then by the study of Torah and by the practice of the commandments that God is "apprehended."

In the Islamic tradition of Qur'anic* interpretation there also arose the question of the nature of the word of God. Was the Qur'an* external letters and sounds or was it internal to God's own being? Is it speech in the ordinary sense of audible sound4

or does it abide only in the mind of God as an idea? The *Al-Babu * 'L-Hadi* 'Ashar* of the Shi'a* theologian, Al-Hilli* (1250-1326), summarizes the divergent opinions on this issue as follows:

> The Ash'arites, because of their doctrine that it (God's speech) is an idea (ma'na*), say that it inheres in his essence. And those who say that it is letters and sounds have differed among themselves. The Hanbalites* and Karramites* say that it inheres in his essence, so according to them he speaks with letters and sounds. And the Mu'tazilites and the Imamites* say (and this is reality) that it is inherent in something else, not in his essence as when he made speech to exist (*awjada*) in the bush and Moses heard it. And the meaning of his being a speaker is that he makes speech and not that he is one in whom speech inheres. And the proof of that is that Speech is a possible thing, and God Most High has power over all possible existences.5

Al-Hilli* goes on to explain why it is impossible for speech as words and letters to be part of God's essence. It is because, "He would become the possessor of senses, because the existence of letters and sounds necessarily depends upon the existence of their instruments."6 God cannot make sounds because God is not a physical being. The same problem exists in the Chassidic case, of course, but is resolved by their theory of *tzim tzum*, the notion that the gross material world (the words and letters of scripture included) descends from God through the contraction of God's ineffable holy nature.

Thus, in both the Jewish and Islamic texts the problem is a similar one. There exists a tension between the fact that scripture has a physical, linguistic, aspect and also the characteristic of being transcendent (for many reasons, but primarily because of its supramundane origins). The Shi'a* position tries to reconcile the two aspects by emphasizing the more physical quality of holy words, suggesting that scripture is something physical, that is, "letters and sounds," and that it does not inhere in God's essence. The Chassidic stance emphasizes the more transcendental side, the supramundane quality of scripture, claiming

that it is one with God but qualifying this by the statement that the Torah known to us is of a more gross material form that has descended from God, ironically, through the partial self-deprivation of his divinity. Despite the different solutions to the problem, however, the tension that leads to this type of speculation is the same: both texts seek to answer the question of how something that is materially immanent in the world can nonetheless partake of supramundane transcendental properties. 7 How can a being beyond the realm of matter interact with the physical world in such a way as to provide it with holy, yet material, guidance in the form of words?

In Buddhist scholasticism a different tension motivates this kind of speculation. There the questions have to do with whether the Buddha's word is physical or mental, whether it exists in the Buddha's continuum or outside of it. These questions, however, are motivated neither by ambivalence concerning the Buddha's corporeality nor by a perception that the materiality of scripture in some way detracts from its holiness or transcendence, a legacy of neo-Platonism that so heavily influenced the scholastic speculation of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. For Buddhist scholastics the problem of the nature and locus of scripture arises in the context of describing the mechanism whereby the doctrine can become a soteriologically valid entity, an adequate medium for the generation of salvific experience. In both the Jewish and Islamic texts examined here, the question focuses on origins: it is posed in speculative and static terms, in the language of neo-Platonic essences, "is God's essence compatible with God's being the origin of scripture, the producer of language?" The Buddhists, not concerned as much with the origins of scripture as with the transmission and internalization of the doctrine it contains, pose the question in pragmatic and dynamic terms: how can the soteriologically valid experiences of an enlightened individual, experiences thatby virtue of being mental statesare nonmaterial, be coded into a material medium, language, and then decoded as the mental states of the adept? Questions of *this* sort motivate Buddhist scholastic philosophers to speculate about the nature of scripture.

In the discussion that follows my goal is not to suggest a single Buddhist answer to this question, something that I think is not, in any case, forthcoming from the textual sources, but to show how the perceived tension between language qua material entity and the nonmaterial experience that it elicits leads to an ambivalence in which scripture is at times conceived as linguistic (material) and at times as experiential (mental) in nature. Although the Indian and Tibetan sources examined are not univocal on the issue of whether the doctrine is physical or mental in nature (nor on the question of its locus), making an answer to the question impossible, it is sufficiently interesting simply to explore the polysemic nature of these opinions. To come to an understanding of such terms as *doctrine* and *scriptare* in their full range of meanings is to gain insight, not only into the technical meaning of these key concepts in Buddhist scholasticism, but into this tradition as a whole.

In Buddhism, as in many religious traditions, a scriptural, that is, linguistic, understanding of doctrine has never been considered an end in itself. Whereas scripture functions in many traditions principally as a guide for proper action (ritual, moral, etc.), in scholastic Buddhism doctrine is conceived of primarily as a guide to experience, especially the form of experience called *insight.* Scripture elicits the transformation of the person by acting as the cause that generates successively more profound and subtle levels of realization that eventually culminate in the state of complete perfection known as *buddhahood.* At least for the scholastic tradition of Buddhism, without the understanding of scripture (the linguistic expression of the Buddha's own insight) there can be no realization (the successive levels of insight that lead to the re-creation within the adept of the Buddha's ultimate experience, enlightenment). 8 Likewise, without having spiritual realization and transformation as its aim, scripture would be nothing but dry words. Given this perceived causal link between scripture and salvific experience, it should not be surprising that the two concepts, words and experience, should have merged at times. This has led to a certain ambivalence in the textual tradition of scholastic Buddhism such that "the doctrine"

(*dharma*) is sometimes considered to be material and sometimes mental in nature.

I. The Portions of Scripture 9

Although the word *dharma* (Tib. *chos)* has various meanings in the Buddhist tradition, in a philosophical context two stand out as primary: (1) "the doctrine taught by the Buddha," and (2) "a phenomenon," a member of the class of all existent things.10 It is the first sense of the term that we are preoccupied with here, but as we shall see even this restricted sense of the word dharma is richer than we might imagine, possessing a semantic range that is much broader than its English equivalent.

In what follows we shall explore the nature of "the Dharma" as doctrine so as to come to an understanding of the part of the Buddha's doctrine that is linguistic, that is, related to and expressed in language, and the part that transcends language. We have avoided discussing *dhamma* in the Pali-Theravada* context for two reasons. First of all, because our principal goal is to contextualize dGe lugs pa exegesis concerning language, a discussion of the Theravada* views on the subject would take us too far afield from our main topic. Second, the subject has already been discussed at length in such recent work as John Ross Carter's *Dhamma: Western Academic and Sinhalese Buddhist Interpretations, A Study of a Religious Concept.*11

The word *doctrine* has a number of different connotations in Western academic and theological contexts,12 but chief among these is the linguistic one: the tenets or beliefs of a religious tradition as characterized in words. Indeed, in a popular sense, the word *Dharma* has very much this same connotation. In the hands of the scholastics, however, Dharma, the doctrine, refers to more than simply words. It connotes as well a set of experiences or states of mind.13

To show how the linguistic and experiential-soteriological senses of the word *Dharma* are linked let us turn to the question of the size of the corpus of the Buddha's word. The Buddha's Dharma is traditionally said to consist of 84,000 "portions"

(*skandha, phung po*,) and the question in the literature then becomes one of identifying the measure of one portion. Some traditional scholars have opted for identifying the size of a portion textually, either as the equivalent of one treatise (sastra *, *bstan bcos*), or as the size of a "Dharma treatise," that is, 6,000 slokas* (four-lined verses),14 or simply arbitrarily as 1,000 slokas* in length. Others have defined it physically as the amount of scriptural material an elephant could carry!15 Still others have explained it in terms of content: as the amount of scripture necessary to expound one doctrinal point, such as "the aggregates," for example.16 The approach followed by both the Abhidharmakosa* and the Tibetan exegetes, however, is to define a "portion" *soteriologically*, that is, as the amount of scripture necessary to counteract one mental affliction:

> The portions of the doctrine were taught in accordance
> With (the number) of antidotes (necessary to counteract)
> the negative activities (*carita, spyod pa*).17

The commentary on these lines states: "Sentient beings have 84,000 negative activities such as attachment, hatred and delusion. As antidotes to these (afflictions) the Lord taught 84,000 portions."18 We must remember that we are dealing here with the identification of the measure of a "portion" of doctrine. And what we see is that even in *this* case, when the object being defined would appear to be overtly linguistic in nature, the dGe lugs pa tradition, following the Indian Buddhist scholastic philosopher Vasubandhu, author of the Abhidharmakosa*, still opts for basing the definition on soteriological or experiential grounds: a portion being the amount of doctrine that must be realized to counteract one affliction.

We find here mentalistic and soteriological elements infiltrating almost every aspect of the discussion of a topic (the size of a "portion" of doctrine) that would, on first inspection, seem to be strictly a question of textual or *physical* measure. However, of the options available to them, the dGe lugs pas choose to define a portion of Dharma neither in physical nor linguistic terms but in psycho-soteriological ones.

II. The Wheel of the Dharma 19

A. The Position of the Abhidharmakosa and Its Bhasya*.*

This dichotomy between doctrine qua language and doctrine qua realization is also expressed in one of the most famous Buddhist metaphors, that of the Dharma as a wheel. The idea is common to both the Mahayana* and Pali sources.20 The sutra* considered to be the Buddha's first sermon, for example, has come to be known as the "Turning of the Wheel of the Dharma" (*Dharmacakrapravartana* Sutra*).21

Under the scrutiny of the scholastics, however, a seemingly innocuous metaphor becomes a major philosophical problem. "To what," they ask, "does the 'wheel of the doctrine' actually refer?" The Abhidharmakosa*,22 considers only the path of seeing (darsana* marga*, *mthong lam*),23 the stage (*lege* realization) that is constituted by the first direct, nonconceptual under-standing of emptiness, to be "the wheel of the Dharma" (*dharmacakra, chos 'khor*).24 It draws out the symbolism of the wheel by suggesting many analogies between the latter and the path of seeing. Like a wheel, this first insight into reality is said to "go quickly" because of its rapid understanding of the truth;25 like a wheel it "goes forward," leaving behind "the object and aspects" of previous, lower realizations, implying progression; like the Cakravartin king's great wheel, it is victorious over what is to be overcome, the afflictions.26

In another explanation it is the noble eightfold path that is said to be like a wheel.27 In this case the *structure* of the wheel is the basis for the metaphor. The hub that gives stability to the rest of the wheel is said to be like the training in moral discipline (silasiksa*, *tshul 'khrims kyi bslabs pa*), the basis for the other two trainings. The spokes, cutting anything that stands in their way as they turn, are said to be like the training in wisdom (prajnasika*, *shes tab kyi bslabs pa*), the realization that cuts through ignorance. Finally, the rim, that holds the spokes and prevents them from falling, is said to be like the training in concentration (samadhisiksa*, *ting nge 'dzin kyi bslabs pa*), the force that single-pointedly perceives its object through the elimination of mental wandering.

It is evident how both of these interpretations of the metaphor of the wheel emphasize the idea that the doctrinal wheel turned by the Buddha is more than linguistic. It is especially mental in nature: a set of spiritual realizations (strictly the path of seeing in one case or the aryan * eightfold path in the other). This same point finds further support in a work of the fifteenth century Tibetan exegete rGyal tshab Dar ma rin chen, when he states that the Dharma is called *a wheel* because, just as the wheel of the Cakravartin king proceeds successively from country to country overcoming any opposition, likewise the Dharma proceeds successively from master to disciple overcoming the afflictions.28

Not all scholars, however, agree on the referent of the expression "wheel of the doctrine." Even though the Sarvastivada* position, as expressed in the Abhidharmakosa*, is that "the doctrine" in this context refers only to a mental state (the path of seeing), in the commentary (Bhasya*), Vasubandhu criticizes this very same Vaibhasika* tenet that he presented in the root text. He says:

> Therefore the doctrinal exposition (dharmaparyaya) itself is also the "wheel of the doctrine"... and its turning refers to its being made known to the mental continuity of another, since the meaning is made to be understood. Then again, since *all* of the aryan* paths (and not just the path of seeing) are elicited within the continuity of the disciple, they are all "the wheel of the doctrine."29

It is clear that for Vasubandhu, therefore, the *dharmacakra* refers just as much to scripture as to realization, and that the realizations being referred to include not only the path of seeing but *all* of the aryan* paths.

B. The Position of Two Canonical Sources

There are two main Mahayana* canonical sources for the notion that the Buddha's teaching is like the turning of a wheel. One is the *Samdhinirmocana* Sutra*, the other, the Dharanisvararaja* Sutra*.30 Both Vasubsandhu, whose position in his commentary to the Abhidharmakosa* is representative of the Sautrantika*

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school, and these Mahayana * sutras* hold that the "wheel of the Dharma" must be taken to refer to more than just a set of realizations. For them "all doctrine qua scripture and qua realization are to be accepted as being the wheel of the doctrine." The reason given for including scripture within the category "wheel of the doctrine" is that traditionally there are said to be three divisions to the turning of the wheel of the Dharma, and these three divisions are said to include all of the *scriptures* of both the Hinayana* and Mahayana*. If the "wheel of the Dharma" did not include scriptures, it could not include all of the scriptures of these two vehicles. The *realizations* are said to be included because they are what "perceive the meaning of the scriptures of those three turnings of the wheel of the Dharma." If the scriptures are to be included, then so too should their cognitive counterparts, those mental states they are meant to elicit.

According to the Sarvastivada* tradition described earlier, then, the wheel of the doctrine is only mental and experiential in nature. Vasubandhu and the Mahayana* sutras*, on the other hand, consider it to consist of linguistic entities (scriptures) and the understanding of those entities (the realizations that the scriptures elicit as the adept comes to understand their meaning).31 In either case it is clear that, in the discussion of what constitutes the "wheel of the Dharma," the doctrine is conceived of as having a mental or psychological component. Doctrine is more than just words, more than merely scripture: it is spiritual realization as well.

III. Doctrine as Scripture and Realization

A distinction needs to be made at this point between *the wheel* of the *doctrine* and the *doctrine* as distinct technical terms. Certain Mahayana* texts, and the Vaibhasika* school as portrayed by Vasubandhu in the Abhidharmakosa*, seem to consider these two to be synonyms and consider both to have linguistic and experiential components. Even though the Abhidharmakosa* root text (expressing Vaibhasika*, i.e. Sarvastivada*, views) considers *the wheel of the doctrine* to refer only to the path of seeing (hence being strictly experiential), we find in that same work

one of the first postcanonical references to *the doctrine* as being composed of both scripture (agama, * *lung*) and realization (*adhigama, rtogs pa*).32 An often cited verse from the text states:

> The holy doctrine of our teacher is of two kinds
> That which is of the nature of scripture and
> that which is of the nature of realization.33

Vasubandhu, commenting on this, says simply that the realizations being spoken of are "the thirty-seven limbs conducive to enlightenment" (*bodhipaksadharma**, *byang chub kyi yah lag*).34 The doctrine qua realization refers, according to both Tsong kha pa35 and his most senior disciple, rGyal tshab rje, to all of the stages of the different paths, from the path of accumulation (sambharamarga*, *tshogs lam*) to the path of no-training (asaiksamarga*, *mi slob lam*). mKhas grub rje, Tsong kha pa's other major disciple, as well as the Sa skya scholar Bu ston Rin chen grub, however, dissent. mKhas grub rje states:

> The wheel of the Dharma qua realization refers to the paths of seeing and of meditation. It does not refer to the paths of accumulation and preparation (that is, to non-aryan* paths,) because (these latter paths) cannot eliminate the seeds of the side discordant (to emancipation) (*mi mthun phyogs gyi sa bon*).36

Whether it refers only to aryan* paths or to all paths, the different commentators are in agreement that the doctrine has an experiential component, the set of spiritual accomplishments known as *realizations* (*adhigama, rtogs pa*). As for the linguistic aspect of the doctrine, Vasubandhu says in his Bhasya*: "Here, scripture (agama*, *lung*) refers to the Sutra*, *Vinaya*, and *Abhidharma."*37

It may be interesting to add parenthetically that at this point in the text of the Abhidharmakosa* and Bhasya* Vasubandhu goes into a discussion of the "longevity" of the Buddha's doctrine.38 He states that the Dharma will last for as long as these two types of doctrine (scriptures and realizations) last in the world. The doctrine, he states, will last for 1,000 years. It was clear to Vasubandhu, however, that doctrine qua scripture had

already outlived its predicted lifespan. Therefore, the figure of 1,000 years, he claims, refers to the lifespan of the doctrine qua realizations, leaving the date for the disappearance of scripture indefinite. 39 It should not be surprising to find that the linguistic aspect of the doctrine, the outer shell of the Dharma, as it were, is believed to survive for a much longer period of time than spiritual experience, its very heart.

Who is it that maintains (dhatarah*, 'dzin pa po) the doctrine in its two aspects? It is said to be those who preach it (vaktarah*, *smra ha po*) and those who practice it (pratipattarah*, *sgrub par byed pa*).40 Hence, the survival of the doctrine is believed to depend on two facts, not only on the maintenance of the scriptural tradition, but on the preservation of the living experiential one as well.

IV. The Jewel of the Dharma

We have discussed the linguistic-experiential ambivalence in the treatment of the doctrine from several points of view: in relation to the definition of a "portion of the doctrine" (*dharmaskandha*), in the exposition of the "wheel of the doctrine" (*dharmacakra*), and as regards the twofold division proposed by the Abhidharmakosa* into scripture and realization. We approach it now from one more perspective, that of the treatment of the "jewel of the Dharma" (*dharmaratna*, *chos dkon mchog*), based on a discussion that is found in the context of the scholastics' treatment of the threefold refuge.

According to the Abhidharmakosa*, the three jewels to which Buddhists go for refuge must be completely beyond the realm of human misery. For example, a Buddha's body is said *not* to be an object of refuge because the body is something that Buddhas possess even before their enlightenment. Hence, because it was shared with a state of imperfection, it cannot be an object of refuge. Given this criterion for what can be classified as a proper object of refuge, it is not surprising that Vasubandhu should maintain that the jewel of the Dharma refers only to the highest spiritual accomplishments of beings who have achieved complete liberation, specifically, the analytical cessation of the two kinds of nirvana*, that of an *arhant* and that of a *buddha*.41 We

see again, consonant with the previously examined views of the Abhidharmakosa *, that the doctrine here, that is, the doctrine as an object of refuge, is considered a soteriological state and not a linguistic entity.

One of the more extensive expositions of the Mahayana* theory of the three jewels of refuge occurs in the *Uttaratantra*.42 There we find that the jewel of the Dharma, that object which acts as the second of the three sources of refuge, is identified with the last two of the four noble truths; namely, the truth of cessation (*nirodhasatya*, *'gog bden*) and the truth of the path (margasatya*, *lain bden*).43 Like the Abhidharmakosa*, it identifies the jewel of the doctrine with the goal of the path, nirvana*, but in addition it considers the path itself, the specific set of mental states leading to that goal, to be part of the doctrine that is the source of refuge. The commentaries add that "the truth of the path" spoken of here is the Mahayana* paths of seeing and of meditation.44

Not only does the *Uttaratantra* indirectly imply the exclusion of scripture qua linguistic material from the category "jewel of the doctrine" by its association of the latter with the last two noble truths (both either mental states or qualities of mental states), it does so *explicitly* in the subsequent treatment of the qualities of that Dharma. Eight qualities are ascribed to the Dharma-jewel by the *Uttaratantra*, the first of which is that it is "beyond thought" (*acintya*, *bsam kyis mi khhyab pa*).45 The commentaries state that this refers to the fact that it cannot be analyzed by linguistic-conceptual thought (*rtog pa*) in terms of any of the four extremes,46 that it cannot be expressed by "sound, voice, speech, way of speech, explanation, agreed term, designation or conversation,"47 being instead only the object of the meditative equipoise of an aryan.48 Hence, not only is the doctrine as source of refuge characterized in soteriological and experiential terms, this is further emphasized to the exclusion of the linguistic element.49

V. The Nature of Scripture

We have examined how the doctrine is perceived as having two components, one mental or experiential in nature and the other

linguistic or scriptural. Let us now turn to this latter aspect of the doctrine, the overtly linguistic aspect, the Buddha's word (buddhavacanam *, *sangs rgyas kyi bka'*). The rNying ma pa scholar Mi pham is of the opinion that the Hinayana* considers the Buddha's speech to be composed of letters and words, whereas the Mahayana* views it as being mental in nature. This is a somewhat nonstandard view, but not altogether without support in the Indian sources. Though Mi pham does not inform us of his source concerning the Hinayana* view, it is most likely the Abhidharmakosa*, where we find the following lines:

> Those 84,000 portions of the doctrine spoken by the
> Conqueror
> Belong either to the (aggregate of) form or to that of
> composite formation, (depending upon whether one
> considers) them to be words or names.50

And the commentary states: "According to those who consider the Buddha's speech to be words (vac*, *tshig*), it belongs to the aggregate of form (rupa*, *gzugs*), and according to those who consider it to be names (nama*, *ming*), it belongs to the aggregate of composite formation."51 Whether form or composite formation, however, in neither case is the Buddha's *speech* considered to be mental in nature.52

Ironically, in holding to the view that the Buddha's word is of the nature of mind, Mi pham finds an ally in Tsong kha pa, who, following the Abhisamayalamkaraloka* in his *Legs bshad gser phreng,*53 makes it clear that he is of the opinion that even the Buddha's *speech* is of the nature of mind. This is ironic because the later dGe lugs pa tradition from rGyal tshab Dar ma rin chen on disputes this view, considering the Buddha's word to be sound and, therefore, physical in nature. Indeed, Se ra rJe btsun pa (1469-1544) actually gives an extensive critique of the idealist view in his *Khabs dang po'i spyi don.*54 The polemics on this point are fascinating, but presenting the argument in detail would take us too far afield from our principal topic. Presently we shall turn to the later (and now standard) dGe lugs pa view on the subject, but to at least allow some semblance of "equal time" to the "mentalists" I quote from Tsong kha pa:

> The fact that what appears as the teacher of the doctrine is the twofold form body 55 and that what appears as his teachings are the twelve categories of scripture is something that exists only within the disciples' frame of reference (*gzhan snang*). Hence, the entirety of the (Buddha's) speech is also but the consciousness of the disciple appearing as this or that kind of name, word and letter. (This process) depends on the illusory-like gnosis of the Buddha as a dominant condition (bdag rkyen) and on the pure mental continuum of the disciple as a causal condition (*rgyu'i rkyven*). There-fore, [the Buddha's word] is something that is related to the mental continuum of the listener and not to the mental continuum of the the Buddha... but because the conscious-ness of the listener arises due to the Buddha's power, he [the Buddha] is said to have created the [Buddha's words] just as, for example, we say that "a divinity created them" when the images (*vijñapti, rnam par rigs pa*) that occur in a dream due to divine powers such as incantations etc. are in actuality one's own consciousness.56

How amazing and radical is this view in which even the Buddha's *words* are not only of the nature of mind, but of the nature of the mind *of the disciple.*

As already mentioned, post-Tsong kha pa exegetical literature on the subject of the Buddha's speech in the dGe lugs pa tradition considers it to be sound (sabda*, *sgra*), and therefore physical (rupa*, *gzugs*), in nature. Sound itself is of different kinds, however, and here the Buddha's words are in a category of sound known as "valid speech" (*ngag don mthun*)57 or "true words" (*bden tshig*).58 A general criterion of all valid speech is that it possess four qualities:

1. content or meaning (*abhideya, brjod bya*),

2. purpose (*prayojana, dgos pa*)

3. ultimate purpose (*pratyartha, nying dgos*),

4. connectedness (*sambandha, 'brel ba*).

Let us consider the classical example of the phrase, "Bring me the water in that pot!" The content or meaning is the bringing of water in the pot; the purpose of the speech is the understanding

of the meaning on the part of the person to whom it is spoken; the goal is the person's response, actually bringing the water; and the connectedness refers to the relationship between the former and latter elements, so that, in dependence on the content, the purpose is fulfilled and, in dependence on the purpose, the goal is fulfilled. 59

As in the case of ordinary speech, religious language is also said to have these four qualities. The content is identified as the different aspects of the doctrine being taught, the purpose is the listener's (or reader's) understanding of the content, the goal is the complete enlightenment that is the result of accustoming oneself to the realization born from the understanding of the content, and the connectedness is the relationship of the former to the latter elements, as in the preceding example.

With this as background we are ready to define the Buddha's word. It is "the teaching (*gsung rab*) of the Buddha which possesses four qualities." Now the four qualities spoken of in this definition are not exactly the same as the ones described previously. Instead, based on a stanza from the *Uttaratantra*, they are given in a slightly more elaborate fashion:

1. That [the texts in question] possess the quality of having as its content the method for the attainment of high future rebirth or emancipation,

2. That the words, which are what express the meaning, be devoid of any grammatical faults,

3. That its function be such that it be spoken for the sake of eliminating all afflictions, and

4. That as its purpose it has the teaching of the benefits of the pacification of the afflictions and suffering.60

We see, therefore, that even when the Buddha's word is considered to be sound, and hence strictly linguistic in nature, the tradition finds it impossible to eliminate reference to the soteriological or experiential dimension of the doctrine from its definition. The very definition of the Buddha's word involves criteria with clear soteriological dimensions.

It behooves us now to examine the notion of religious treatise or sastra * (*bstan bcos*). Ordinarily the term is used in opposition to the word sutra*. Whereas the latter usually signifies the actual words of the Buddha, the former is used in the sense of "exegesis." It is not always the case that the categories of "sutra*" and "sastra*" are mutually exclusive, however. rGyal tshab rje, based on a stanza from Vasubandhu's Vyakhyayukti*, defines a sastra* as "that which possesses the two qualities of opposition (*'chos*) and protection (*khyob*),"61 where the term *opposition* refers to the fact that sastras* should act in opposition to the afflictions (klesa*, *nyong mongs*), and the term *protection* the fact that it should protect one from the states of lower rebirth and from suffering in general. Bu ston Rin chen grub gives another definition: "It is a work that explains the meaning of the Buddha's word, is in accordance with the path for the attainment of emancipation, and is composed by someone with a nondistracted mind."62 The dGe lugs pa scholastic rJe btsun Chos kyi rgyal mtshan states that this definition, which is based on a passage from the *Uttaratantra*,63 is not the definition of a sastra* in general but only of a sastra* when considered in opposition to a sutra*. For rJe btsun pa *all* sutras* are sastras* because they fall under the first of the two definitions, the more general of the two. The second definition is more in line with the common usage of the word sastra*, implying that it is exegetical in tone. However, rJe btsun pa states that this is not a criterion on which to base whether or not something is a sastra.* For rJe btsun pa, then, the word sastra* connotes a variety of scriptural entities including sutras*, sastra* in a commentarial or exegetical sense being valid only as a definition of those entities when contrasted to sutras*. In each case we notice once again the soteriological elements in the definitions: the former evolving exclusively along soteriological lines and the latter incorporating the criterion that such works must be in accordance with the path to liberation.

Nowhere in the preceding analysis of scripture and commentary do we ever find historical considerations or requisites of authenticity as criteria in the definition of holy word.64 Indeed, as we have seen, some scholars have gone so far as to

suggest that the Buddha's word does not belong to him at all, being found instead in the mental continua of the disciples. This is, however, a rather nonstandard view. Ordinarily the Buddha's wordsindeed, anyone's wordsare said to be contained within the continuum (samtana *, *rgyud*) of the person who spoke them. This means that a text like the Abhisamayalamkara*, a work attributed to the Buddha Maitreya, is (in the standard dGe lugs pa interpretation) the sound of the words of the text65 contained within the continuum of Maitreya Buddha. In other words, only the words spoken by him are considered to be the Abhisamayalamkara*. The text as recited by anyone else is not the Abhisamayalamkara* itself but only a simulacrum thereof.66

We began this chapter with a naive notion of doctrine (Dharma) as scripture, that is, as *the words* that elucidate the tenets and beliefs of Buddhism, and we have seen how much more complex the question of the nature of scripture really is. Not only have we witnessed the mentalistic and idealistic tendencies of the exegetes in regard to the question of the Dharma in general, but even in regard to the nature of scripture (agama*) itself, a category that one would normally consider overtly linguistic, we have seen how the experiential and soteriological elements play an important role in the very definition of the Buddha's word and of the term sastra*. We have also pointed out how, in the most radical view, even in the case of scripture the linguistic connotation has been completely lost, leaving in its wake a strictly idealistic interpretation of the nature of sacred text.

None of this would be at all surprising if doctrine were to be seen in its proper light in the Buddhist scholastic tradition. Throughout its history the teachings have always been considered to be a provisional entity, not an end but a means.67 As we have seen in the discussion of the four criteria that religious language must satisfy, the immediate aim of scripture is the communication of meaning that is of soteriological importance, whereas the ultimate aim is the attainment of those soteriological goals themselves. Both the words and the intellectual understanding of their meaning are but stepping stones to the true goal, which is the state of human perfection known as *buddhahood.*

VI. The Analogy of the Raft

There is no more appropriate analogy for the provisional nature of scripture than that of the raft. In the context of discussing the nature of the jewel of the Dharma, rJe btsun pa, following his Indian predecesors, makes a distinction between the true or ultimate Dharma jewel and the provisional one. In this context the analogy of the raft is discussed:

> The twelve branches of scripture contained within the continuum of the disciple are not an ultimate source of refuge because, when the meaning of the scripture is completely realized, then, like a raft, it must be abandoned. The Sutralamkara * states:
>
> Once the meaning has been understood, all of the doctrine should be seen as being similar to a raft.
>
> The *Commentary to the Uttaratantra* states: "The Dharma is of two kinds, the Dharma which are the teachings and the Dharma which are realizations. The Dharma which are the teachings refers to the verbally enunciated teachings, such as the Sutra* pitaka*, and it is a collection of names, words and letters. Since it culminates in the realizations of the path, it is like a raft."68

We build a raft to cross a river, but *when* we have reached the other shore and the raft has fulfilled its purpose we abandon it. This too is the nature of the linguistic aspect of doctrine; it is a pragmatic and provisional entity that has no ultimate value in and of itself.

In the Buddhist tradition there has, at times, been a great tension between the scholastic and the purely meditative traditions, each of which has been prone to its own excesses. The meditative traditions (epitomized by certain schools of Ch'an-Zen) have at times repudiated the need for the study of the scriptures as a prerequisite to spiritual growth.69 The scholastic tradition, on the other hand, has often become immersed in words to the exclusion of practice. It has become fascinated with intellectual pursuits, forgetting what is arguably the most important of Buddhist tenets, that the ultimate aim is not the

acquisition of factual knowledge but of transformative experience. 70 It is both of these extremes that the parable of the raft is implicitly criticizing. The raft (the Dharma) is necessary to cross the river of suffering, but once it has been used to achieve that goal it has served its purpose. Hence, the word of the Buddha is considered to be a vehicle for the attainment of nirvana*. Beyond this practical aim, however, it is useless. What is the means for proceeding from words to experience? How is the adept to bridge the gap between dry words and the buddahood to which they point?

VII. The Knowledge Born from Listening, Thinking and Meditation71

Describing the process of transforming words into spiritual realization, the Abhidharmakosabhasya* states: "Applying the un-derstanding to the essence of a thing is called knowledge. And what is that knowledge like? It arises from listening etc. It arises from listening; it arises from thinking; and it arises from meditation."72 The text also states:

> One listens to that which is in accordance with the truth, or hears its meaning. Having listened to it, one gives unmistaken thought to it, and having thought about it, one engages in single-pointed concentration. Hence, the wisdom born from thought arises based on the wisdom born from listening and the wisdom born from meditation arises based on the wisdom born from thought.73

The root text of the Abhidharmakosa* presents the Vaibhasika* view on this process:

> The minds which arise from listening etc.
> Have names, both (names and meanings) and (just) meanings as their objects, (respectively).74

The Vaibhasika* view, therefore, is that the wisdom born from listening has as its object words alone, that born from thinking has both words and their meaning as its object,75 and when there arises the wisdom born from meditation, words are com-

pletely transcended and the meaning alone is the focus. The process is likened unto a child's learning how to swim. At first, when children are inexperienced, they are always held up by parents to protect them from sinking. When they have attained a certain level of expertise, they are given some freedom of movement, though still supported at other times. Once they have mastered the art, they are given complete freedom to swim at will. It is implied, therefore, that words act as the guide to assure the validity of the experience, keeping the adept on the right track, as it were. They must, however, eventually be transcended once their meaning has been fully grasped. 76

This view, however, is criticized both in the Bhasya* and subsequently by Tibetan exegetes like rJe bstun pa.77 The former states that if the knowledge born from listening focuses on words and that born from meditation focuses on meaning, then nothing would be left on which the knowledge born from thinking could focus, presumably because apart from words and their meanings there *is* nothing upon which conceptual thought *could* focus. In the Bhasya*, then, Vasubandhu states his own view as being this. He claims that the knowledge born from listening is a form of ascertainment (niscaya*, *nges pa*) that arises from validly verified scriptural testimony (*apta* vacanapramanyajata*, *yid ches pa'i lung tshad ma las skyes pa*); that born from thinking arises from logical analysis (yuktinidhyanaja*, *rigs pas ages par brtags pa las skyes pa*); and that born from meditation arises from samadhi* (samadhija*, *ting nge 'dzin las skyes pa*). Vasubandhu's own view, then, avoids all reference to the dis-tinction between words and their meaning in the definition of the three types of knowledge. The advantage, presumably, is that by. setting up the criterion of logical analysis as the determining factor of the second knowledge, that born from thinking, he is relegating to it a distinct place among the three types of knowledge, using criteria that are independent of the other two.78

Here rJe btsun pa criticizes not only the Vaibhasika* view but Vasubandhu's as well. He claims that it is incorrect to consider the knowledge born from meditation to focus exclusively on meaning because the Buddha has such knowledge, and *it*

focuses not only on meaning but on words as well (and indeed on all phenomena, because it is omniscient in nature). 79 He also claims that the knowledge born from meditation cannot be said to arise principally from samadhi* because "not all cases of samadhi* are mental states born from meditation, for there are one-pointed samadhis* within the desire realm."80 Implicit here is the assumption that all cases of knowledge born from meditation must occur beyond the desire realm, that is, from the first dhyana* on. Why this is so he leaves unexplained.81 rJe btsun pa's own view is that the wisdom that arises principally from listening to the scriptures is the knowledge born from listening, that the knowledge born from thinking about the meaning of scripture is the second knowledge, and that the knowledge born from meditating within any samadhi* above the first dhyana* is the knowledge born from meditation.

From these views we can glean what are perhaps the two most important points in understanding the role that language, and especially scripture, play in the Buddhist scholastic tradition. First of all, *scripture is necessary*. The first step (whether it is a knowledge of mere words or valid testimony) involves a reliance on language, and the meaning of this language must ultimately be penetrated (whether or not this necessarily involves logical analysis). Second, understanding of both the words and their meaning are but preparatory stages to the internalization of that meaning via the transformative experience of meditation (again, whether or not this necessarily involves the attainment of the first dhyana*).

To put it succinctly, then, the knowledge of scripture qua language and its meaning is a *necessary* but not a *sufficient* condition for enlightenment. That it is necessary is evidenced by the multitude of textual passages in which the nature and the role of scripture is discussed (as the Dharma, as the wheel turned by the Buddha, in the parable of the raft, as the basis for the first two types of knowledge, and so forth). That it is not sufficient is witnessed by the tremendous tensions that exist in regard to the nature of scripture (the mental-physical ambivalence), by the perceived need to eventually transcend linguistic

doctrine (as in the parable of the raft), and by the fact that beyond the first two types of knowledge, which involve words, is a third type, which does not. Ultimately, words find their fulfillment in the set of transformative experiences known as *realizations.*

The dGe lugs pas consider themselves followers of the Indian scholastic tradition, and they believe themselves to be true to their intellectual predecessors in attempting to strike this very delicate balance between the necessity and the ultimate inadequacy of scripture. Indeed, it is not unfair to characterize the entire dGe lugs pa philosophical enterprise as an attempt to maintain this balance between scripture as a necessary means but insufficient end. In the chapters that follow we shall see how this theme is one aspect of a more general attempt to create in philosophical and religious inquiry a place for language generally. This motif, we shall see, will manifest itself in different ways in regard to other issues, such as epistemology, ontology and logic.

It would be an overgeneralization to claim that the same concerns and tensions regarding scripture that we find in Indo-Tibetan scholasticism are endemic to scholasticism as a whole. Instead, what seems to emerge, to use a Wittgensteinian metaphor, is a picture of overlapping threads of similarity. What gives strength to the rope of scholasticism as a general and abstract notion is no one single thread but instead the pattern of overlapping resemblances. Both Jewish and Islamic scholastics see as one of their major problems that of resolving the tension between the material-thisworldly aspect of scripture and its nonphysical-transcendent quality, a tension they go about resolving differently, however. Buddhist scholastic philosophers find themselves in a similar predicament, though here the tension is between the linguistic aspect of doctrine and its potential as a source of salvific experience. Different as these concerns might be, there emerges in these various scholasticisms a pattern of concern for holy writ. Scripture is the source of scholastic philosophical speculation, and it is against the standard of scripture that such speculation is ultimately tested. This motivates the scholastic to find scripture an

ontological home, a locus that keeps it near at hand while allowing it to partake of that more exalted sphere to which it points.

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Chapter 3
Hermeneutics: The Truth and Meaning of Scripture

Would you then believe certain parts of the Scripture, while you would reject others?
Qur'an * *(Surah* 2:85)*

Reason is in agreement with revelation and there is nothing in revelation except that which agrees with reason.
Ibn 'Aqil* *(1040-1119)1*

When scripture is such a major concern for the scholastic, it should not be surprising that elaborate methods for its interpretation should have developed. Given the scholastic penchant for self-reflection, it was simply a matter of time before the first-order *act* of exegesis led to second order theorizing on commentary and the formulation of exegetical rules. This consisted in part of systematic speculation concerning the meaning of scripture and in part in the creation of methods whose goal it was to distinguish between different kinds or levels of meaning in sacred texts. Hence, in Islamic law (shari'ah*) there exists a distinction between texts that are to be literally interpreted (haqiqah*) and those that are to be interpreted figuratively (majaz).2 The tenth century Babylonian rabbinic scholar Sa'adyah Gaon ennumerates four cases under which the interpretation of a biblical passage is justifiable;3 in

the works of the great Jewish commentator Rashi (1040-1105) a distinction is made between the literal (*peshat*) and the homi-letical (*derash*) meaning of sacred texts, a distinction that was expanded to a fourfold list by the thirteenth century Spanish scholar Nahmanides. 4 In the history of Christianity, Origen's classification of the senses of scripture into a threefold divisionsomatic, psychic and pneumaticgave rise in medieval times to the fourfold senses of scripture: literal, analogical, moral and anagogical.5

In the Western scholarly literature, the subject of scholastic exegesis and hermeneutics was central to the discussion of scholasticism as a method, and much of this discussion turned toward etiology. As early as 1889 scholars of European Christian scholasticism became interested in the question of origins. In that year J. A. Endres argued that the scholastic method of instruction (*scholastische Lehrmethode*) does not begin until Abelard's (d. 1142) *Sic et Non* ("Yes and No," or "Pro and Con"), a work whose goal it was to teach a method of reconciling the contradictory opinions of the Fathers of the Church. Endres suggested that the origin of scholasticism lay not in Aristotle, the accepted opinion at the time, but with the early scholastics themselves.6 Martin Grabmann, two decades later, would find several earlier examples of this same type of work (in both Eastern Christianity and in the West), work whose goal was to reconcile "apparent" contradictions in the tradition. All of Grabmann's texts predated Abelard, thereby effectively pushing the date of the origin of the scholastic method back by decades.7 The question of origins was taken up once again by George Makdisi over half a century later. In his influential article, "The Scholastic Method in Medieval Education: An Inquiry into Its Origins in Law and Theology,"8 Makdisi suggests that systematic attempts at reconciling the contradictions present in tradition really begin with a certain branch of the Muslim study of law (*al khiI'af*), and that the origin of scholasticism as a method lies not in Christian, but in Muslim, culture. Makdisi's thesis has been criticized,9 but this does not concern us here. Instead, what is interesting about the etiological analyses of these three scholars is

the fact that, despite their disparate historical conclusions, all agree that what makes the source of scholasticism a source is the fact that it attempts systematic reconciliation of the contradictions that plague the tradition, thereby implicitly establishing this as the essence of the scholastic method. Such an essentialistic viewpoint is undoubtedly problematical. Nonetheless, it must be admitted that the application of reason to the analysis and reconciliation of inconsistency, scriptural and otherwise, is certainly of great importance to the tradition that forms the focus of our inquiry here. In this chapter we shall explore some of the hermeneutical techniques of Buddhist scholasticism, strategies developed to solve the problem of scriptural inconsistency. 10

L Scripture and Valid Knowledge

Scholastics are systematizers, and as such they seek to bring unity to a tradition. To accomplish this, scholastic philosophers have often considered it necessary to create (or, less charitably, to impose) a monothetic vision on a polysemic textual corpus. Among other things this has meant, as we have seen, the creation of hermeneutical strategies that aim at reconciling scriptural inconsistency, thereby bringing the canon into line with the scholastic's own unitary vision. It is especially this latter aspect of scholastic hermeneutics that we shall focus on here.

We have seen that the Buddhist scholastics of India and Tibet believe scripture to be an indispensable tool for spiritual progress. The vast amount of scriptural material available to the prospective adept, however, makes selectivity a necessity. The Buddhist canons11 comprise volumes and volumes of often radically disparate views. Hence, methods had to be developed for the interpretation and systematization of the scriptures. Before we turn to these methods, however, some general remarks on the role of scripture in Buddhism are in order.

Buddhism has often been touted as a nondogmatic religion, and this can certainly be agreed to with some provisos. As we shall see below, whether or not it is true of the actual practice of Buddhist "theology," it is certainly the case that, at least

in its self-perception, that is, ideologically, Buddhism claims to be committed to a radically critical perspective. Despite the claims of some scholars, 12 this critical spirit, so eloquently captured in the parable of the goldsmith,13 is simply too important a part of both Early and Mahayana* Buddhism to be challenged.

When we turn our attention to the question of scriptural authority in Chapter Four, we shall see that Buddhist scholastics have posited two forms of valid knowledge (pramana*, tshad *ma*): direct perception (pratyaksa*, *mngon sum*) and inference (anumana*, *rjes dpag*). The scholastics have, at least in theory, dismissed the possibility that scripture could in general be used as proof of doctrine that it is a third source of valid knowledge. Certainly, holy writ was believed to serve as a guide for generating inferential, and eventually direct, understanding, as a distant cause of such certainty. Our examination of the importance of scripture in the spiritual path, as outlined in the previous chapter, should be enough to indicate that this was never at issue. The hearing-reading of scripture itself, however, was *not* considered to constitute such knowledge. As we shall see, only in very rare cases, in instances when the point in question could be proved in no other way, could one justifiably turn to scriptures to provide the special kind of apodictic knowledge that was normally provided by sense perception and inference. What is more, even in these few cases, scripture had to meet extremely rigorous conditions to be considered trustworthy, conditions that most interesting scriptures failed to meet, for one of the requirements of such "trustworthy scriptural testimony" was that the text could not contradict a passage in any other scripture. But given the size of the Buddhist canon, if a text ex-pounded a thesis concerning a point of interest, it was almost certain that the antithesis would exist in another scriptural tract. The fact that a text could be used as a source of proof or verification *only* in the case of very obscure pointspoints that could not be verified by other meanscombined with the fact that any such scripture had to meet very stringent conditions meant that the vast bulk of scriptural material was more the *object* than the source of verification.

It is clear, in any case, that the priveleged status of the Buddha as an enlightened and omniscient being was not perceived as guaranteeing for the adept, at least at the level of theory, the validity of his word in regard to questions of truth; and if the veracity of the Buddha's word was not by fiat certain, then it necessitated a method for its verification.

II. Truth and Authenticity

The need to reconcile the divergent opinions expressed in the Buddhist scriptures led to a new genre of texts. If the early sutra * literature, the *Abhidharma*,14 and Prajnaparamita* (Perfection of Wisdom) Sutras* represent a first-order or base level of scripture, sutras* such as the Samdhinirmocana*, which attempt to arbitrate inconsistencies between first-order scriptures, can be termed second-order (or meta-)scriptures. By the time such questions had reached Tibetan exegetes like Tsong kha pa and mKhas grub rje the issues were at least third order (and sometimes fourth). The Tibetan exegetes not only tackled the problem of reconciling two first-order scriptures, but also took as their subject matter second-order scriptures like the Samdhinirmocana*, trying to reconcile *its* claims (which they of course considered to be the word of the Buddha) with those made in other sutras* and sastras*.

This, of course, was no mere intellectual exercise. As we have seen, the proper understanding of scripture was considered a sine qua non to enlightenment. Hence, for Tibetan exegetes like Tsong kha pa, to properly interpret scripture, to resolve the problems of meaning and truth that confronted him, was an essential religious task and, in keeping with what he perceived to be the tenets of Buddhism, had to be carried out in a thoroughly nondogmatic fashion. He states at the beginning of the *Legs bshad snying po:*

> It is impossible to elucidate [the status of a scripture] simply [by relying upon] another text which says "this [scriptural passage] is of definitive meaning" (nitartha*, *nges don*) because, [were this the case], it would have been pointless for all the Mahayanists* to have composed so many com-

> mentaries. Moreover, there are many disagreements between the very texts which say that they settle [the question of what is of] definitive and what is of provisional meaning (neyartha *, *drang don*). One is unable to settle the issue simply by [quoting] a scripture which says "this [text or pas-sage] is of such and such [a meaning]," because when it cannot be done [in this way as regards] general questions [that is, first-order substantive questions, why should it be so as regards] the specific issue of definitive/provisional [meaning, that is, second and higher order hermenetuical questions].15

He concludes that, "in the end it is necessary to distinguish (such texts) by nonmistaken reasoning itself,"16 and not by the dogmatic determination of the answer, one that relies on scriptural proof texts.

To summarize, second-order scriptures attempt to reconcile inconsistencies between first-order ones. Third-order texts deal with the inconsistencies of second-order texts and so on. In this hermeneutical circus the tricks become successively more and more daring (and exponentially more complex) as we proceed from level to level.

Before we can discuss the actual modus operandi for the reconciliation of inconsistencies, one major question needs to be answered. Why is there a need for reconciliation, arbitration, or interpretation in the first place? After all, if two religious texts diverge, is not the simplest solution to challenge the authenticity of one of them and claim that the "historically" later one is apocryphal?

This notion, that the reconciliation of inconsistenties could be accomplished through the exclusion of certain texts from the canon, that is, through questioning their authenticity, is certainly found throughout the history of Buddhist thought, but it has for the most part been one-sided. The Sautrantikas are said to have criticized the innovations of the Abhidharmists, refusing to consider the Abhidharma literature part of the canon. According to traditional hagiography, Vasubandhu initially criticized the "heretical Mahayana*" followed by his brother, Asanga.*17 Indeed, even present day Theravadins* question the

authenticity of the Mahayana * scriptures.18 The critique however is unidirectional, for the Abhidharmists did not call into question the authenticity of the Nikayas*, nor does the Mahayana* deny that the Pali canon is the word of the Buddha.19 It is interesting that we find the same pattern repeated in the case of the Vedic tradition, where the brahmanas* who were followers of the *A tharvaveda* did not reject the authenticity of the three earlier *Vedas* (trayi*), although they did consider them "'limited,' for *brahman* alone was infinite, and this *brahman* was truly reflected only in the *Atharvaveda."*20

Even though the debate did focus in part on questions of the authenticity of texts, for the most part content, and not authorship, was the focus of controversy. The emergence of new scriptural material and the reinterpretation of already extant texts is a sign of the vitality of a tradition. Thus, the Mahyana* sutras*, the Tantric scriptures, and even the Tibetan *dgongs* gter (teachings said to be intuited in a "revelatory" fashion even to the present day)21 bring with them a steady influx of creativity into the tradition. It seems that to have dismissed these works as apocryphal would have been to skirt the real issue, that of their meaning. Instead, once a sutra* (or a tantra for that matter) had made a debut and survived the process of introduction, it became accepted as the Buddha's word (*buddhavacana*), and once *this* occurred, its contents, its meaning, and its veracity (and not its authorship), became the object of debate. I have dealt extensively with the scholastic repudiation of historical and philological criteria in the determination of what is the Buddha's word elsewhere, making it unnecessary to treat it once again here.22 What is most interesting in the present context is that the self-conscious rejection of history may be a pan-scholastic trait: in the words of Gershom Scholem, "the faithful promptly discard the historical question once they have accepted the tradition; this is the usual process in the establishment of religious systems."23

Be that as it may, once a text had achieved canonical status, it was primarily its definitive (nitartha*, *nges don*) or provisional (neyartha*, *drang don*) status that came into question, not its authenticity.24

III. Truth in the Buddhist Scriptures

Buddhists have traditionally held that the word of their founder expresses the truth (*satya*, *bden pa*). In his *History of Buddhism* (*Chos 'byung*), the great Bu ston Rin chen grub quotes a sutra * passage describing the Buddha's doctrine as being "of good meaning" (*svartha*, *don bzang po*), and he comments "'of good meaning' refers to the perfection of the subject matter, which is incontrovertible."25 Moreover, the tenth of the sixty good qualities of the Buddha's word (sastyakara* *upeta* vac*, *yang lag drug cu dang Idan pa'i gsung*)26 is that it is "free from fault,"27 the twenty-ninth that "it is correct, because it does not contradict valid knowledge,"28 and the fifty-first that it is "perfect, since it brings about the completion of all the aims of beings."29

Given this characterization of the Buddha's word, an obvious question arises. Can the word of the Buddha (or even of great saints the likes of Nagarjuna* and Asanga*, for that matter) be anything *but* true? If not, if such scriptural material must be true by *definition*, this brings into question the scholastic commitment to a rational-critical perspective. More important, how are the contradictory claims we find in the corpus of scripture to be reconciled, if, by definition, the contents of scripture as a *whole* must be true? We shall see in what follows that the problem is solved in part by qualifying what it means for a sciptural passage to be true, by limiting the kind of truth that is being predicated of the Buddha's word when it is said to be "true." This, however, will not solve the problem entirely. In addition, as we shall see, there is an attempt to create a hierarchy of Buddhist doctrine and in this way to solve the problem of scriptural inconsistency in its entirety.30 I will make a case for the fact that in this tradition of scholastic philosophy a pragmatic notion of truth is operative alongside the more common notion of truth as "absence of logical inconsistency." What is more, I will delineate some hermeneutical methods for dealing with scriptural inconsistency that, although not denying its presence, order scriptural material in a system of succesively higher levels of validity based on logical and soteriological criteria. Let us examine first the notion of truth in its pragmatic sense.

We turn for a moment to Tibet and in particular to a series of debates that occurred between the eighth Karma pa, Mi bskyod rdo rje (1507-1554) and the dGe lugs pa scholar Se ra rJe btsun chos kyi rgyal mtshan (1469-1544). 31 In the latter's '*Gag lan kLu sgrub dgongs rgyan,* he ascribes the following position to the Karma pa, his opponent: "when one is commenting on the meaning of a sutra* which teaches the Madhyamaka view, if one interprets it as a Cittamatra* (Mind-Only) work it will be the ruin of the teachings (*bstan pa chud gzan pa*)."32 The work in question is not a sutra* but a sastra* of Vasubandhu, and the view being expressed by the Karma pa (or at least by the Karma pa as read by rJe btsun pa) is a commonsense one. If Vasubandhu's commentary interprets the Prajnaparamita* Sutras* (which both Se ra rJe bstun pa and the Karma pa accept as Madhyamaka works) as if they were expounding the tenets of another school, namely, the Cittamatra*, then Vasubandhu is in error, and his text cannot be said to expound the truth. In reply rJe bstun pa has this to say:

> The Acarya* Santipa* explained the intended meaning of the Prajnaparamita* Sutras* to be the Cittamatra*. The Catuhsatakatika* also says that the Sthavira Dharmapala* explained the intended meaning of the Muadhyamaka* karika* as Cittamatra*. Now because these [sages] interpret sutras* which expound the Madhyamaka view... as Cittamatra* works, were this to ruin the teachings, [as the Karma pa claims], then [one would be reduced to saying that] similar to those two sages, the Lord [Buddha himself] in his own scriptures [ruined the teachings], for [did not the Buddha himself] extensively teach the Cittamatra* views as the third wheel for the purpose of leading the disciples who have propensity (rigs) for the Cittamatra*?33

Thus, rJe btsun pa's point is this: to misinterpret (whether deliberatelyfor the sake of leading disciples onto a higher, albeit limited, pathor not) is not necessarily to ruin. It does not lead to fallacy, to a work being considered untrue. Both rJe btsun pa and the Karma pa consider the Cittamatra* to be an inferior doctrine that suffers from logical fallacy. They differ, however, in that the latter considers a Cittamatra* interpretation of a

Madhyamaka scripture to be false, to be the ruin of the teachings. However, rJe btsun pa considers a Cittamatra * misinterpre-tation of the Prajnaparamita* no more a fallacy than the Buddha's own original Cittamatra* teachings.

These polemics point us in the direction of the notion of truth that Buddhists have in mind when they claim that a doctrine (or an interpretation of a doctrine) is true. We know that, at least according to rJe bstun pa, neither logical nor hermeneutical fallacy leads necessarily to the ruin or the falsity of the teachings. Hence, true and valid teachings can suffer from these two types of fallacies. Therefore, when the Buddha's word is characterized as true in the previous contexts, it is not in a dogmatic sense. Instead, the word true in these contexts has a definite *pragmatic* tinge to it.34 When Bu ston characterizes *buddhavacana* as *svartha*, as being "of good meaning," when the sutras* call it "perfect" and "free from fault," or when rJe btsun pa claims that a doctrine can be valid or true despite hermeneutical or logical fallacy, they are not claiming that all of the scriptures are *unconditionally* true, but that they are *pragmatically* true. Why are they pragmatically true? It is because they are all conducive to the spiritual development of those who hear them. Kajiyama makes this same point when he states that "the lower doctrines were not simply rejected but admitted as steps leading to an understanding of the higher ones."35

The Buddha's word is well-spoken (subhasita*), says the Vyakhyayukti*, for ten reasons, the fifth one being that it is "spoken in accordance with the intellectual faculty of various human beings." We can see that this is indeed what is being pointed to when truth or validity are predicated of the Buddha's word in its entirety. *Truth* here refers to soteriological validity and not to the absence of logical inconsistency. It is in a pragmatic, and not in a dogmatic, sense that the word is used here.

IV. Scriptural Inconsistency and Its Solution

Two things should have now become evident. First, questioning the authenticity of scripture is not generally a means for reconciling scriptural inconsistency in the Mahayana*. In fact, chal-

lenging the authenticity of non-Mahayana * texts is actually prohibited by certain of the bodhisattva's vows. Second, the Buddhist scriptures are considered to be entirely true, but only in the pragmatic sense described earlier.

To preclude debate about authenticity shifts the focus of attention from authorship (*pudgala*) to doctrine (*dharma*).36 To make the unqualified assertion that all of the scriptures are pragmatically true accomplishes two things. It first of all reaffirms the Buddha's status as an enlightened being who "never speaks without a special purpose,"37 and more important, it engenders within the disciple a sense of respect for the teachings, all of which must now be considered relevant to spiritual progress. It implicitly shifts the focus of attention from considering the doctrine as mere words (vyanjana*) to considering it as relevant and meaningful (artha).38

If the Buddhist scriptures are, as the dGe lugs pa tradition seems to claim, authentically the word of the Buddha, and if they are pragmatically true, then two possible means for resolving the contradictions that arise in scripture have been precluded. These scholastics could neither take the route of dismissing scriptures as spurious nor could they deny the perfection of the Buddha by dismissing some of his scriptures as pragmatically false, as lacking soteriological worth. It is not surprising then that in a state of utter despondency the bodhisattva Paramarthsamudgata* should have exclaimed in the *Samdhinirmocana* Sutra*:

> We see that in some sutras* [the Lord] says that all phenomena lack an essence (svabhava*). In others, the own-characteristic (svalaksana*) of the aggregates etc. are said to exist. When we compare these two statements, a contradiction arises, and since there should be no contradictions, I ask [the Lord]: with what intention did you state that essences do not exist.39

There is indeed a third alternative for resolving such inconsistencies, and it comes in the form of the doctrines of provisional meaning (neyartha*, *drang don*) and definitive meaning (nitartha*, *nges don*). It is neither the authenticity nor the pragmatic truth of the Buddhist scriptures that the tradition questions, but rather their intended meaning (abhipraya*, *dgongs pa*).40 In short, some-

thing had to give, and if it was to be neither authenticity nor soteriological worth, then it had to be meaning or intention.

All of the scriptures, as we have seen, are believed to have two properties in common: they are all authentically the word of the Buddha and they are all pragmatically true. They differ in that they are not all considered to be *unconditionally* true, 41 which is to say that when subjected to analysis some are found to be faulty, though even then soteriologically valid. Those that passed the test of critical evaluation were considered unconditionally true and were labeled as being of definitive meaning (nitartha, *nges don*), which is to say that they were considered to be the ultimate intention (*dgongs pa mthar thug pa*) of the Buddha. With this hermeneutical strategy, in which rationality becomes the guiding principle of interpretation, the focus changes from considering the word of the Buddha as true to considering truth to be the Buddha's word (or at least his ultimate intention or purport).

The way in which this was accomplished, the method for setting up these doctrines of definitive and provisional meaning, varied from school to school. In his discussion of these concepts in the Pali scriptures, K. N. Jayatilleke states that "when he [the Buddha] is pointing out the misleading implications of speech... his meaning is direct [i.e., definitive]."42 Though this may be one interpretation of what it means for a text to be of direct or definitive meaning, it is not a definition accepted by all of the Hinayana* philosophical schools,43 and it is certainly not a definition that would be accepted by most Mahayanists*. In the Mahayana* we have an overabundance of textual material that deals with the doctrines of definitive and provisional meaning. The issue is raised in the Lankavatara*, the *Samdhinirmocana*, the Samadhiraja*, the Aksayamatinirdesa* and in later Indian sastric* literature, such as Candrakirti's* Prasannapada*. It becomes especially important in Tibetan exegetical literature, especially in the commentaries of Dol bu pa Shes rab rgyal mtshan and Shakya mchog ldan, in the philosophical works of Bu ston and of course in such dGe lugs pa works as the *Drang nges legs bshad snying po* of Tsong kha pa and the *sTong thun chen mo* of mKhas grub rje, which in turn have their own corpus of

commentarial literature. To this latter interpretation we now turn.

A. Scriptures of Provisional Meaning

The tenth century rabbinic scholar Sa'adyah Gaon believed that most biblical passages should be taken literally, but he recognized four circumstances under which a passage could be interpreted: (1) when the literal meaning contradicts reasoning, (2) when it contradicts sense experience, (3) when it contradicts another biblical passage, and (4) when it contradicts the oral tradition. 44 Likewise, dGe lugs pa exegetes assume as a working principle the notion that a text must meet three criteria to be considered of provisional meaning (neyatha*, *drang don*).These are:

1. that it have a referent, which is the true intention (*dgongs gzhi*),45

2. that it have the property of necessity (*dgos pa*),

3. that it contradict reality if taken literally (*dngos la gnod byed*).46

If a treatise is to be considered of provisional meaning, if it cannot be taken literally, then there must be some *correct* interpretation of the text. This is referred to as the "referent that constitutes (the text's) true intention" (*dgongs gzhi*). It is the ultimate purport of the text, the actual or ultimate meaning of a text or passage, the "true" doctrine to which it refers.

There must also be a necessity (*dgos pa*), a reason why that "true doctrine" was taught in such a concealed or hidden fashion, that is, in a way that requires interpretation. This is the second criterion that a text of provisional meaning must meet.

Finally, some logical inconsistency (*dngos la gnod byed*)47 must result from taking the passage literally. Were there no contradiction in taking the apparent, surface meaning as the actual intention of the text, then it would not be of provisional meaning, but of definitive meaning. Some examples should clarify what is meant by these criteria.

Again we turn to the rJe btsun pa/Mi bskyod rdo rje polemics. There we find the former making the assertion that the

last three works of Maitreya (the Mahayanasutralamkara *,48 the Madhyantavibhanga*,49 and the Dharmadharmatavibhanga*50) are Cittamatra* treatises (and not Madhyamaka ones) because they put forth the doctrine of three final vehicles (*mthar thug gyi theg pa gsum*), interpreting sutras* that teach only one final vehicle (ekayana*) as being of provisional meaning.51

The Tibetan exegetes agree that in Sutralamkara* (XI, 53), for example, we find the seven "referents that constitute the true intention" (*dgongs gzhi*) for the doctrine of the ekayana*. Because the Sutralamkara* expounds the doctrine of three final vehicles, it finds objectionable the doctrine of the ekayana* and sets out to interpret it as a tenet that cannot be taken literally. This it does by positing these seven "referents," which are the true intention behind such a doctrine, that is, the actual doctrines intended by the Buddha when he taught the provisional doctrine of one final vehicle. Suffice it here to cite just the second of these referents, nairatmya* tulyavat.52 All of the vehicles are "equivalent (as regards the fact that they all teach) selflesssness," and it is because of *this* similarity in the vehicles (and not because there is one final vehicle), that the Buddha taught the ekayana*. The commentary explains, "that there is one final vehicle taught 'due to an equivalence as regards selfless-ness' means that there is a similarity in the vehicles, that of the sravakas* and so forth, as regards the nonexistence of a self."53 This, then, is an example of the *dgongs gzhi*. It is the actual or ultimate intention of a text or passage, the basis or referent that underlies and supports whatever provisional doctrine is literally expressed by the text.

The claim being made by the Sutralamkara* is that when the Buddha taught the doctrine that there was only one final vehicle (ekayana*, *theg pa gcig*) his actual intention (abhipraya*, *dgongs gzhi*) (or at least one of them) was to point out similarities in the tenets of the different vehicles, tenets such as selfless-ness. He did not, therefore, intend that the doctrine of the ekayana* be taken literallythis, at least, according to the Sutralamkara*.

Let us consider another example. In response to the claim that the "buddha nature" (tathagatagarbha*) is in reality a self or

a soul, the Lankavatara * says, regarding the true referent (abhipraya*) of such a teaching, "The Lord spoke: my doctrine of the tathagatagarbha*, Mahamati*, is not like the doctrine of the self advocated by the heterodox, for the Tathagatas* teach the doctrine of the tathagatagarbha* having designated it to mean emptiness."54 The intended referent of the doctrine of the tathagatagarbha* is, according to the Lanka*, nothing but the doctrine of emptiness. It thus implies that statements such as those in the Ratnagotravibhaga* that claim that the tathagatagarbha* is a soul (atman*), that it is permanent (*nitya*) and so forth, cannot be taken literally. These are two examples of the way in which the notion of abhipraya* forms an integral part of the process of classifying a work as being of provisional meaning.

Necessity (*dgos pa*) must also. be present. Why was it necessary for the Buddha to teach the doctrine of the ekayana* if it cannot be taken as unconditionally true? The Sutralamkara* replies: "So as to convert some and so as to hold on to others, the Fully Enlightened Ones have taught the ekayana* to those of indefinite (lineage)."55 The commentary goes on to explain that although there are three final vehicles, there are some beings, those of indefinite potential or lineage (*aniyata*), who could take either Mahayana* or Srakava* paths, and that the existence of these beings necessitated (*dgos pa*) the teaching of the ekayana*. Not to have taught it would have meant that these beings might have settled for the less lofty goal of the sravakayana*, thereby failing to realize their full potential.56

It is also "necessary" to identify the tathagatagarbha* with the self. The Lankavatara* states: "The Tathagatas*, the Arhants, the Fully Enlightened Ones, teach the state of nondiscrimina-tion, the state without appearances, by means of the doctrine suggesting a tathagatagarbha* so as to turn away the fear of egolessness that worldlings have."57 Thus, according to the Lanka*, it is necessary to expound the doctrine of the buddha nature, a provisional teaching, so as to skilfully lead those beings who fear selflessness to an understanding of it. As in the previous case of the ekayana*, it is a question of skill in means (upaya* kausalya*).58

The third criterion, that there must be some fallacy in taking these tenets as they stand, is the crucial point, for if no fallacy could be found, there would be no need to posit a "basis" or a "necessity" in the first place. The first two criteria, ascribing actual intention and motivation to certain teachings, should be seen as a byproduct of the third; namely, that the literal text in some way contradicts reality. This, then, is the essence of a text of provisional meaning: that it suffers from logical fallacy, contradicting our experience of the world.

Although the discussion of the characteristics of a provisional text and the implications of this to scholastic exegesis is interesting in its own right, it is especially important because it leads us to the discussion of what constitutes a *definitive* text. If a text must fulfil these three criteria to be considered provisional, contrariwise, we can determine that a text of definitive meaning is one that *lacks* these three characteristics. More specifically, a definitive teaching *cannot* contradict reality.

B. Scriptures of Definitive Meaning

What kind of doctrine, what text, does not contradict reality? Different schools of Buddhist philosophy have answered this question in different ways. Indeed, this fact in large part distinguishes them as different schools. According to the Madhyamaka only one doctrine does not contradict reality, and that is, of course, the doctrine of emptiness. Therefore, scriptures that teach emptiness are identified as being of definitive meaning by the Madhyamaka. In discussing this point, Bu ston, Tsong kha pa and mKhas grub rje *cite* this famous passage from the Aksayamatinirdesa * Sutra*:

> What are the sutras* of definitive meaning and what are the sutras* of provisional meaning? The sutras* that teach the conventional are said to be of provisional meaning and those that teach the ultimate are said to be of definitive meaning. Those sutras* that teach various words and letters are said to be provisional sutras*. Those sutras* that teach the profound, the difficult to see, the difficult to realize, those are said to be of definitive meaning. The sutras* that teach con-

> cepts such as sell being, life, nourishment, mankind, personality (etc.)... these sutras * are said to be of provisional meaning. Those sutras* that teach that things are empty, without characteristic, wishless, noncompounded, unarisen, unproduced, that teach that there are no beings, no life, no personality, no owners, [in short] those sutras* that teach the door to emancipation should be known to be of definitive meaning. And that is why it has been said "rely on scriptures of definitive meaning and not on scriptures of provisional meaning."59

This idea of defining scriptures of definitive meaning in terms of whether or not they teach emptiness is a characteristic of Madhyamaka thought in general. It is, according to Tibetan ex-egetes, a tenet shared by both the Prasangika* and Svatantrika* subschools of the Madhyamaka.60

Given a somewhat pervasive Buddhist skepticism concerning language's ability to depict reality, it has been argued by some non-dGe lugs pa scholastics that *any* doctrine expressed linguistically (as emptiness is) cannot *but* contradict reality. And if it does contradict reality (which we will recall is the principal criterion characterizing a sutra* of provisional meaning) then how could it be of definitive meaning? Those who maintain such skepticism in regard to language seem to be faced with a paradox: for a scripture to be considered definitive it must linguistically depict emptiness and yet in the very act of linguistically depicting it is reduced to the level of being provisional. We deal with the issues of ineffability and the limits of language in Chapter Nine. Suffice it to say at this point that for the dGe lugs pas the claims as to the "ineffability" of emptiness cannot be taken literally, for emptiness can be depicted linguistically.61 Indeed, it is exactly the correct enunciation of the doctrine of emptiness that characterizes a scripture as being of definitive meaning. This is, according to mKhas grub rje, the ultimate intent of the Buddha. It is the unqualified truth. Therefore, any scripture that fails to teach emptiness must, of necessity, be interpreted. This still leaves unanswered, however, the question of how one is to know which interpretation of emptiness is the correct one. Tsong kha pa's answer is, perhaps de-

ceptively, simple. He says, "through nonmistaken reasoning itself."

For the dGe lugs pas, therefore, in the end the critical spirit must triumph. 62 If along the way spatiotemporal concerns (such as authenticity) are disregarded, and if overtly religious presuppositions (such as the infallibility of the Buddha) prohibit the repudiation of the pragmatic value of the doctrine, it is only to pave the way for the truly important questions, those of truth as determined by critical inquiry.63 In the end, it is not so much that the words of the Buddha are true as it is that the enunciation of ultimate truth becomes the sole criterion of the Buddha's intention.

Scholasticism is a systematic and rationalist enterprise. At the same time scholastics are committed to maintaining scripture both as the basis for and the testing ground of philosophical speculation. But the scriptural canon, much to the chagrin of the systematician, is not univocalit is filled with internal inconsistencies; nor is it always rationalpresenting us with a plethora of claims that challenge both experience and reasoning. What this means, of course, is that the implementation of the scholastic's rationalist, systematic, and holistic vision requires sophisticated hermeneutical skills. The details of scholastic hermeneutics will of course differ from tradition to tradition: not every scholastic philosophy has developed a pragmatic notion of the truth of scripture as have the Indo-Tibetan schools, nor have they come to subsume meaning to reasoning. Nonetheless, what is true of Indo-Tibetan scholasticism may turn out to be true of many other traditions: that scholastic hermeneutics is essentially a balancing act, one whose aim it is to simultaneously uphold the three things most dear to scholastics: scripture, rationality, and the ideology that constitutes its unitary vision of the world.

Chapter 4
Commentary: The Enterprise of Exegesis

I only pass onto others what has been passed onto me. If there is any lack of learning in my writing, any obscurity of expression or superficial treatment, you may feel sure that it is in such places that I am most original.
St. Bellarmine 1

The Master said, He who, by reanimating the Old, can gain knowledge of the New is fit to be a teacher.
Confucius, *Analects (II, 11)*

If hermeneutics is the theory of. scriptural interpretation, then exegesis is its practice. Just as the *scholium* or textual commentary was central to European Christian scholasticism, so is commentary, in a variety of subgenres, integral to the Indo-Tibetan Buddhist case. Indeed, it may not be inappropriate to define the age of Buddhist scholasticism in these very terms; namely as the age of commentary.2 Buddhist commentarial style is extremely diverse, with its own equivalents of *glossa*, commentary *ad literam*, *summa*, *questiones*, *sophismata*, and so forth. In short, Buddhist commentarial style is as diverse as that found in the scholastic traditions of Europe and China.

In the previous chapter we witnessed how Indo-Tibetan scholastics set forth a hermeneutic based on reasoning as a way of solving the problem of scriptural inconsistency. In the

present chapter we shall turn our attention to the practice of scriptural *interpretation.* It is an enormous task, however, to attempt any sort of general treatment of this subject. Without a doubt, a Buddhist "history of exegesis," on the order of Henri de Lubac's treatment of the subject in a medieval Christian context or of John Wansbrough's in an Islamic setting, would more than rival the latter works in length. 3 For this reason I have decided to considerably limit my treatment of the subject here. Instead of dealing with the particulars of commentarial style or with a typology of commentary in a historical framework, desiderata to be sure, I have instead chosen to focus on some key *theoretical* concerns. Specifically, the present chapter deals with certain philosophical problems that the early Buddhist scholastic tradition in India confronted, problems that impinge directly on the validity of commentary as a genre of religious literature. In what follows, therefore, I explore theoretical problems confronted by the early Indian Buddhist scholastic tradition concerning the practice of commentary as a whole, questions that will illuminate and contextualize some concluding remarks that focus, not on the Indian, but on the Tibetan commentarial tradition.

I. The Importance of Scriptural Study

It is hardly possible to overestimate the importance of scriptural study in Buddhism.4 Even in Zen, certain schools of which are often portrayed as the epitome of antiintellectualism, there are many cases of adepts who are said to have attained insight in the very process of reading scripture.5 Be that as it may, we have seen that, at least in the Indo-Tibetan scholastic tradition, the necessity of scriptural study was taken for granted. One of the greatest figures of Indian Buddhist scholasticism, the eleventh century Bengali saint Atisa*, in his Mahayanapathasadhanavarnasamgraha,* urges the adept to:

Read the sutras * dealing with the Bodhisattva ways
And study the sastras*.
Never be satisfied with the teachings,
Always seek more learning.
This is the source of all progress,
Like the ocean collects all rivers
And becomes a bed of treasures.6

Following in this same tradition, Tsong kha pa states in the preface to the "Insight" (vipasyana*) section of one of his greatest works, the Great Exposition of the Graded Stages of the Path (*Lam rim chen mo*): "Rely on a scholar that knows, without error, the essentials of scripture, and devote yourself to the study of stainless textual exegesis. The knowledge born from the study and intellectual analysis of reality is a sine qua non for insight."7

Although a great deal more could be said about the importance of scriptural study to the Indo-Tibetan tradition of Buddhist scholasticism, as we have seen already, the study (sruta*) and intellectual analysis (cinta*) of scripture came to be considered indispensable for the attainment of enlightenment. In the words of the *Sphutartha* of Haribhadra, "by the incremental arising of the understanding that comes from studying, the disciples will attain the epitome of goodness (enlightenment)."8

So far we have focused on the way in which scripture serves to bring the adept realization. We must not forget, however, that we are dealing here with a Mahayana* scholastic tradition. Being such, it was considered essential that the principal motivation for scriptural study be consonant with the bodhisattva ideal. It is undoubtedly with this thought in mind that Vasubandhu begins his commentary to the twelfth chapter of the Sutralamkara* by stressing that, after finding the doctrine oneself, it is incumbent upon one to teach it to others.9 Hence, for the Mahayanist*, the study of the doctrine is important not only for one's own sake, but also because teaching others is the chief means of benefiting them. The giving of the doctrine (dharmadana*) is said to be the best of gifts.10

II. All the Rest Is Commentary"

There is an anecdote in the Babylonian Talmud that tells of an incident in which Hillel was confronted by a certain "heathen" who demanded to be taught the entire Torah while standing on one foot. He replied to the man, "That which is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor. This is the entire Torah; the rest is commentarygo and learn it." In discussing this, Barry Holtz states that "Jewish literature is strikingly unique: it is creative, original and vibrant, and yet it presents itself as nothing more than interpretation, a vast set of glosses on the one true Book, the Torah. In ways far beyond what Hillel could have imagined, the rest is commentary." 11

Granted that the history of Buddhism has witnessed an incredbile variety of scriptural traditions: from the Nikayas* and *Vinaya*12 to the Abhidharma, to the Mahayana* Sutras* and their philosophical systematization in the sastric* literature. Still, once these works achieved "canonical status" (in the broad sense of the term) and their authority became accepted fact, the enterprise became one of interpretation,13 so that, as in the Jewish tradition, once truth had been set down, all that remained was the elucidation of meaning, or purport,14 through commentary. Of course, great innovations did in fact occur, but ideologically, that is, rhetorically, there was a commitment to portraying the tradition as having reached a certain canonical finality.15 Everything that needed to be said had been said, only its exegesis remained.16

In this regard, the words of one of the great scholars of Jewish mysticism, Gershom Scholem, ring just as true of the Buddhist scholastic attitude toward scripture-tradition as they do of the Rabbinic tradition he is characterizing:

> Truth is given once and for all, and it is laid down with precision. Fundamentally, truth merely needs to be transmitted. The originality of the exploring scholar has two aspects. In his spontaneity, he develops and explains that which was transmitted... no matter whether it was known or whether it was forgotten and had to be rediscovered. The effort of the seeker after truth consists not in having

> new ideas but rather in subordinating himself to the continuity of tradition... and in laying open what he receives from it in the context of his own time. In other words: not system but *commentary* is the legitimate form through which truth is approached 17

In a sense, everything that came after the Buddha's word was considered commentary on it,18 but given the problematic of the codification of the. canon, especially in light of the rise of the Mahayana* sutras*, what the Buddha's word *was* was not at all clear. On the one hand is the problem of identifying which works were canonical and therefore worthy of commentary,19 on the other we find that much of the early commentarial literature reached such a level of authoritativeness that it came to be considered on par with the Buddha's own words.20 Much of the early sastric literature, for example, begins to be commented upon with almost the same vigor as the more strictly canonical works. Hence, to draw a single consistent line and say that it is from *this* point forward that the tradition turns to commentary as the primary mode of religious expression, or to put it another way, to attempt to identify a canon that is the *object* of commentary, at least in the early stages of the scholastic tradition, is an almost impossible task. Notwithstanding the fact that it may be impossible to pinpoint an exact textual or historical point at which the transition to commentary occurred, it seems to me indisputable that Buddhist scholasticism can, to a great extent, be characterized in these terms; that is, as a turn to commentary as the chief literary style.21

In the preface to his *Monologion* Anselm tells us that everything found in that work had already been expounded by Augustine. That Buddhist literati also considered themselves the mere transmitters of tradition through the act of commentary is witnessed by the numerous cases in which the author of a text will begin a work with the disclaimer that the composition contains nothing new.22 This is often accompanied by a statement concerning the author's own limitations and unworthiness to the task. So prevalent did this stylistic feature become in the later literature that the Tibetan exegetes came to name the phenomenon, calling it "the expression of modesty" (*khengs*

skyung ba) and considering it "anatomically" a frequently occurring, if not an essential, structural element in sastric * literature. One of the most renowned examples occurs in the first verse of Santideva's* Bodhicaryavatara*:

> There is nothing written here that has not occurred before And I have no experience in the art of composition.23

Examples of this rhetorical device, namely, the claim that there is no novelty to the composition, that it is but the transmission of truths that have been previously expressed, are plentiful in the textual traditions of other world religions.24 In this regard, it is interesting to note that in the Tibetan tradition the task of the great Mahayana* philosopher-saints Nagarjuna* and Asanga* is not considered to be one of founding anew the Mahayana* tradition, but as one of reestablishing a tradition that had been either temporarily lost or purposely suppressed.25 All of this goes to show the extent to which the later tradition considered its principal literary enterprise to be one of commentary.

III. The Nature of Commentary

Scholasticism, with its universal and holistic vision and in its thoroughness and penchant for analysis, came to believe that no phenomenon fell outside of the analytical scope of the scholastic method. Every category of religious and secular phenomenon was seen as falling within its purview.26 It is not surprising, therefore, that commentary itself, as just such a category, eventually came under the scrutiny of the scholastics. What had once been a vehicle for religious expression turned reflectively upon itself in an attempt to characterize its own nature. Commentary became aware of itself.27

This turn in Buddhist intellectual history is, I believe, one of the most interesting, for it suggests that scholasticism involves more than just commentary, in many ways epitomized in commentarial self-consciousness. Among the Brahmanical schools, such reflection occurred very early,28 but among Buddhists extensive discussions of this type did not occur until the

middle of the first millenium C.E., with such texts as the Mahayanasutralamkara * and Vasubandhu's Vyakhyayukti*. One of the most complete and philosophically mature characterizations of commentary as a whole occurs in the Tibetan exegetical literature on the Abhisamayalamkara*. Almost every school of Tibetan Buddhism29 devotes an extensive portion of its scholarly literature to the treatment of the anatomy and typology of commentary. Although interesting in its own right, I have opted here for discussing neither the anatomy (i.e., the organic, stylistic features) nor the typological classification of commentary, but instead some theoretical issues related to the enterprise of the exegete.

In what follows, then, I shall examine two major questions that Indian and Tibetan scholastics themselves recognize as posing a threat to the task of commentary, to the very life's blood of the scholastic tradition. Because these two issues are central to the tradition, they illuminate the nature and function of commentary. One concerns the possible ineffability of doctrine; the other, the doubt cast upon the completeness and adequacy of a root text by the very fact that it requires commentarial exegesis.

As I have treated the question of ineffability in the context of the "undeclared facts" (avyakrtavastu*) in Chapter Eight, I restrict my discussion here to another issue that is the focus of an interesting passage in Vasubandhu's Sutralamkaratika*, where he sets forth the views of an opponent:

> Because the doctrine is something to be realized by oneself, the Lord Buddha did not teach it. Therefore, the teaching of the doctrine is purposeless. Those things that are to be realized individually by oneself, that is, those *instances of things* to be realized individually by onself, that are understood by the lords, the buddhas, cannot be taught to others, just as the word "fire" cannot express the nature of fire. If the word "fire" *could* express the nature of fire, then when one said the word fire, one's mouth should burn!30

The opponent's objection is a fascinating one and has many implications to questions in the philosophy of mysticism. It is essentially in two parts. It states, first of all, that the Buddha's

doctrine is something internal, to be realized by oneself alone. The conclusion is that, therefore, the doctrine is not something that can be taught. Such a claim can be characterized as asserting a form of "psychological ineffability," the notion that interior mental states (e.g., those of the Buddha) cannot be communicated to others. 31 The other claim, though related, is much broader and actually casts aspersions on the entire scholastic enterprise as a whole. Here, the idea is that language itself is inherently limited in its ability to act as a medium of communication, a thesis that we shall refer to as *linguistic ineffability*. Just as the word *fire* cannot truly convey the nature of fire (if it did it would burn one's mouth), so too doctrine qua words cannot convey *its* essence, the inner spiritual states. How does Vasubandhu deal with this conundrum? He states:

> Granted that words cannot express the nature of the doctrine. Nonetheless, the lords, the buddhas, teach the doctrine in terms of parables/metaphors (katha-udbhavita*, *gtam bsnyad pa*) that accord with it. In this way they make the disciples understand that which is to be realized individually by oneself. That is why we say that, "the doctrines of logical explanations lead beings to the phenomena." The teaching of a logically explained doctrine leads [beings] to the phenomena of the world. For this reason, the teaching of the doctrine is not purposeless.32

Vasubandhu's message is quite clear. He is willing to grant that words cannot elicit instantaneous spiritual realizations. He maintains, however, that this was never the function of words in the first place, that words are merely pragmatic tools, parables, that bring about spiritual realizations *indirectly*. A logical explanation is the *first step* in the generation of spiritual insight; it is not, nor was it ever claimed to be, the instantaneous cause of insight. In this regard it is significant that Vasubandhu, immediately after this discussion, goes on to explain the process of study, contemplation, and meditation, the very program that leads from words to experience, as we saw in Chapter Two. He states that "if one becomes involved in the teachings of reality, and studies, contemplates, and meditates on them, one obtains incremental understanding. Hence, the teaching of the doctrine is not purposeless."33

Briefly, the doctrine was never meant to generate instantaneous spiritual insight (just as saying the word fire does not instantaneously generate the experience of heat in the mouth of the speaker or ears of the listener). However, "logical explanations," that is, a valid commentarial tradition, is the indispensable first step to the generation of realization, just as one's communicating the need for a fire is the first step in experiencing warmth. To put it in terms of the categories described previously, Vasubandhu is willing to grant the possibility of qualified psychological ineffability but not of linguistic ineffability.

Let us now consider the other major obstacle to the scholastic enterprise, that of redundancy. Most scholastics consider scripture to be both *complete* (nothing essential is left out) and *compact* (it contains nothing unessential). This means, of course, that scholastics need to explain the repetitious and redundant quality of sacred texts. This very question is also dealt with by the Jewish exegetes Kimhi and Malbim, to take two disparate examples. 34 Moreover, if a scriptural text is complete, this seems to vitiate the need for commentary, making the commentarial enterprise itself redundant. The latter is one of the principal theoretical problems dealt with by Indian and Tibetan scholastic exegetes.

The Abhisamayalamkara* (AA) is considered a commentary on the Prajnaparamita* Sutras* (Mata* Sutras*). When the later literature discusses exactly in what capacity AA acts as a commentary on the latter we find considerable discussion concerning the question of precisely which of those sutras* form the basis, that is, the focus or subject matter, of AA's exegesis. Moreover, Haribhadra's Sphutartha*, as the principal commentary on AA employed by the Tibetan tradition, then comes under scrutiny;35 and here again there is considerable discussion of certain issues concerning the reason and motivation behind commentary and its ultimate function.

A commentary is, first of all, an explanation (*bshacd byed*) of another text.36 Specifically, it is an explanation of the meaning of the words of another, presumably more fundamental, text;37 in the present case, AA is the explanatory commentary on three Prajnaparamita* Sutras*, called "the fundamental sutras* to be

explained" (*bshad bya'i rtsa ba'i redo*). rGyal tshab Dar marin chen states in his commentary to AA, the rNam *bshad* snying *po'i* rgyan, that "[the Abhisamayalamkara *] clearly teaches the hidden meaning that abides in the three sutras*, the extensive, middling and abreviated [Prajnaparamita* Sutras*]."38 Likewise, Haribhadra's *Sphutartha* is considered to be a commentary that clarifies (*sphuta*) the meaning (*artha*) of AA, allowing one to see it as the ornament (alamkara*) to the Prajnaparamita* Sutras* that it in fact is.39 The perceived function of the Sphutartha* as a commentary, therefore, is that it demonstrates the effectiveness of AA as a commentary!

That commentaries comment *on* something and make it more clear may seem to be a fairly trivial point, but for the truly scholastic mind even an apparent platitude can present difficulties. Consider the following conundrum: if the AA succeeds in its task as a commentary, then it should make the meaning of the Prajnaparamita* Sutras* clear. If so, then what need can there be for a further commentary on AA? Now anyone who has ever read the AA would not for a moment question the need for the extensive commentarial literature to which it has given rise. It is an extremely terse and virtually unintelligible text that is better described as a table of contents than a commentary. Nonetheless, if AA had truly succeeded in making lucid the meaning of the Prajnaparamita* Sutras* (and how could the tradition question this when it accepted the author to be the future buddha, Maitreya), what need could there be for a text like Haribhadra's *Sphutartha*, or for the myriad Tibetan commentaries and textbooks (*yig cha*) that in turn comment on Haribhadra? What is even more problematic, if the Buddha himself was the perfect teacher who spoke the Prajnparamita* Sutras* in the most peda-gogically effective manner possible, as the tradition maintains, then how could *these* be anything *but* clear in their meaning? What need could there even be for a text the likes of AA?40

Only a tradition as analytical and self-critical as that of Buddhist scholasticism could possibly have questioned the very purpose of its own existence. If the Buddha was the perfect teacher, the enterprise of exegesis, and therefore scholasticism as a tradition, was purposeless. Vice versa, if the commentary

and analysis of hundreds of years of tradition was *not* useless, then it seemed to imply a lack in the Buddha's teachingsthat something was wanting in the Buddha's words.

Where scholasticism creates problems, however, it also tries to solve them. It is not that the commentarial tradition says anything new. Truth, as Scholem states, had been set down once and for all. Nor is it the case that exegesis supplements something that is lacking in the original root text. Speaking of the relationship of the Madhyamakavatara * (Candrakirti's "Supplement to the Middle Way") to Nagarjuna's* Mulamadhyamakakarika* ("Treatise on the Middle Way"), the text on which it comments, Jeffrey Hopkins states that "Jam-yang-shay-ba explains that Chandrakirti was not filling holes in the *Treatise* in the sense of providing what was incomplete or making extensive what was not already extensive, but rather in the sense of making what was already extensive more so and of taking secondary subjects as principal."41 There is another sense in which the Madhyamakavatara* acts as a "Supplement" to the Karika*, says Hopkins, and that has to do with the fact that the Madhyamakavatara* makes clear the fact that the Karika* are to be interpreted as a Prasangika* and not as either a Cittamatra* or as a Svatantrika* work, hence contextualizing the Karika* by creating for it an ideological home, a unique philosophical locus different from other loci available at the time.42 Again, the words of Scholem resonate here, for it is clear that for the Buddhist scholastics, as much as for Rabbinic Judaism, the function of a commentarial tradition was "to lay open what one receives from [a text] in the context of one's own time." In an exchange between Confucius and his student, Tzu-kung, in the *Analects*, the student cites a passage from the *Songs* that illustrates to the Master the very point he is making. In effect he is demonstrating to Confucius the applicability of an ancient classical text to a contemporary situation, to which Confucius replies: "Now I can really begin to talk to you about the *Songs*, for when I allude to sayings of the past, you see what bearing they have on what was to come after." This is of course a point similar to the one being made by Scholem and Hopkins.

Let us not, however, lose track of our original question. We are here attempting to determine how a tradition reconciles, on the one hand, a rhetoric that implies a static conception of commentaryof exegesis as presenting nothing newand on the other of its presumed efficacy as an evolving tool that aids in understanding. There is another way to get at the question of the nature and function of commentary, and that is by examining the audience at which the commentary is directed. Traditionally, the intended audience (*chad du bya ba'i dul bya*) of the AA is considered to be bodhisattvas of extremely keen mental faculties (*byang chub seres dpa' dbang po shin tu rnon po*). These bodhisattvas, moreover, are said to be quite capable of understanding the Prajnaparamita * Sutras* without the aid of the AA. What then is the purpose of the text, and why was it intended for them? AA is a special type of commentary called an upadesa* (man ngag), which Bu ston Rin chen grub defines as follows: "It is that which makes one quickly understand the object to be understood and which teaches (1) either the hidden meaning or (2) a condensed and brief method for understanding, the [otherwise] extensive meaning of the sutras*."43 From this point of view AA does not introduce anything new, but brings to the surface meaning that, though hidden in the depths of the Prajnaparamita* Sutras*, is nonetheless believed to be present there all along. In another sense the function of AA as a commentary is a pragmatic one: for the highly intelligent, it provides an abbreviated means for intuiting the otherwise extensive subject matter of the *Prajnaparamita**.44 In this sense, commentary, at least of the upadesa* variety, acts like a mathematical formula, to encapsulate in a very terse format what would otherwise take many pages of vernacular to explain.45

Tsong kha pa states the resolution to the problem in the following way:

> Even though the three Mother [Prajnaparamita* Sutras*] have already made clear the eight topics (*dngos po'i brgyad*), that does not make purposeless the composition of the Alamkara* [AA] because the understanding elicited by the sutras* requires a great deal of time, whereas this sastra* elicits an understanding of the eight topics quickly and with little difficulty.46

In short, the task of commentary is still perceived to be one of transmitting truths that have already been made known. The fact that nothing new is being said, however, does not vitiate the need for commentary. Even when a commentary contains nothing new in terms of *subject* matter, the mode *of exposition*, suited as it is to the times and the audience, can exhibit tremendous originality. Hence, the creativity of commentary lies not in the novelty of the subject matter, but in the originality of exposition.

Notwithstanding, it is not unfair to say that in its attempt to validate the function of commentary, the scholastics are pulling at straws, and in the end, it may not be inappropriate to characterize scholasticism as ultimately unconcerned with questions of originality.

IV. Tradition and Creativity

Barry Holtz summarizes very lucidly the problem faced by the modem Western mind when facing the scholastic world-view:

> Conditioned as we are to the importance of ideas such as "originality" and "creativity" it is hard for us to imagine a world where such terms are of little value.... In this skepticism we are, no doubt, more than merely victims of the narcissistic inclinations of the present age. For the problem of "originality" has been with Western culture at least since the rise of romanticism, a century and a half ago, and our image of the "creative" person (particularly the poet seeking the new phrase or the composer the new musical turn, but also the religious soul seeking new insight), conditions the way we look back on the texts of another time. 47

Whether consciously or not, our tendency in encountering a tradition that seems relatively unconcerned with questions of originality and creativity is to consider it to be stagnant or, worse yet, dead.48 And yet, it is hardly possible to ignore the fact that, in traditional religious cultures, nothing thrives more vigorously or lives a longer life than scholasticism. The modem mind, well trained as it is in the "hermeneutic of suspicion," will claim that longevity is no guarantee of vitality. Fair enough, but let us give

scholastics the benefit of the doubt. Let us see whether spiritual vitality might not be found in another guise, in a mold that the modern mind, accustomed as it is to equating vitality with novelty, might not be overlooking.

There is hardly a more curious fact in the history of Tibetan Buddhist scholasticism than this one: that from about the year 1700, once the monastic textbooks(*yig cha*) had been written, there is virtually no new commentarial literature in the dGe lugs pa school of Tibetan Buddhism. Despite this fact, this highly scholastic tradition continues to thrive (even in exile). Why this is so historically is an extremely interesting question, but one that is, unfortunately, beyond the scope of this chapter. *That* it is so gives us, it seems to me, both a locus for exploring (and more important a clue as to the nature of) religious vitality. If a tradition of commentary devoid of originality elicits visions of stagnation, a tradition in which even commentary has ceased to exist can conjure up nothing short of rigor mortis itself. And yet I would claim, with Holtz, that such visions are unwarranted.

Tibetan monastic debate (*rtsod pa*) came to replace commentary as the prevalent form of scholastic exegesis. Religious vitality is here preserved through the internalization of doctrine via an oral tradition, specifically, that of memorization, oral commentary, and monastic debate. It is fitting for a religion that began as an oral tradition, as Buddhism and its competing cults in India did, to find its way back to orality as the paradigmatic form of religious expression. The doctrine, having been revealed, was expounded in exquisite detail for 2,000 years, and now, in its final phase, it remains only for the individual adept to internalize this truth, first intellectually, through the practice of debate, 49 and ultimately directly, through the practice of meditation. Hence, viewed from a dGe lugs pa perspective, the tradition passes through three main stages: one that culminates with the establishment of the canon, one in which the chief focus is commentary based upon that canon, and finally one in which those commentaries are internally appropriated dialectically through the practice of formal disputation.50

Martin Grabmann and others have shown that the *disputatio* became a distinct form for teaching and learning the-

ology in medieval Europe only after the lecture (*lectio*) and academic sermon (*praedicatio*). 51 It would be interesting to see if the rise of the *disputatio* in Europe also brought with it a decline in commentary. John Trentman has noted that early seventeenth century European scholastics did abandon the writing of commentaries on Aristotle and the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard, so prevalent in the classical medieval period, in favor of writing their own synthetic and systematic works, works that became the basis for university curriculi for the next century.52 Synthetic treatises are nonetheless written texts and a far cry from the oral disputation that I am suggesting is the present evolute of classical dGe lugs pa scholasticism. Whatever the case in Europe, it is clear that the energy once chanelled into written commentarial exegesis *in the dGe lugs pa tradition* is now focused on oral debate. Scholarly standing in the this school is determined by one's performance as a debater. Although in recent years, to conform with Western academic models, written examinations have been instituted, these are not taken seriously by traditional scholars. Today, as for the past several hundred years, the greatness of scholars is not measured by their writings but by their ability on the debate ground. What determines someone's ability as a debater? Strangely enough, it has little to do with winning. In Tibetan formal disputations there is rarely any talk of victory or defeat. Apart from some features of style, what makes someone an expert debater is his53 ability to embody the tradition, to act as a siphon for the hundreds of years of scriptural exegesis to which he is heir. And how is this ability gained? Through the practice of debate itself.

When two monks square off in the debate courtyard, they are there not only to refine their intellects; more important, they are there to refine their knowledge of scripture, to themselves become the embodiments of a scriptural tradition, to become vessels of scripture. The last of the three historical phases mentioned previously, then, is one of appropriating the Dharma, one that involves the internalization of doctrine. This should not be taken as implying that the internalization of the doctrine has not always been important nor as implying that the art of disputation is not extremely old. Still, it seems to me that at a

certain point in Tibetan history the idea arose that everything that needed to be said had so fully and clearly been said that all that remained was its appropriation, and it is here that the tradition replaces commentary with dialectics, much in the same way that the earlier transition replaces canon with commentary. In this sense, for the dGe lugs pas, all the rest is *not* commentary. The commentarial enterprise has a terminus, and that endpoint was reached several centuries ago when commentary was replaced by a curriculum of study that stressed formal philosophical disputation as its central feature.

I have relied in this chapter on theories developed in the discipline of Judaic studies partly because Buddhist studies is still immature when it comes to discussion of questions concerning canon and commentary and partly because of the similarities between the Judaic and Buddhist scholastic traditions, at least as regards the structure of scriptural exegesis. It is only fitting that I conclude, therefore, with the words of one of the great contemporary scholars of Judaism, Abraham Heschel. In describing *pilpul*, the characteristic method of dialectical study that had its origins in the ancient academies in Babylonia in the first centuries of the common era, he states:

> Its goal was not to acquire information about the Law, but rather to examine its implications and presuppositions; not just to absorb and to remember, but to discuss and to expand. All later doctrines were considered to be tributaries of the ancient, never-changing stream of tradition. One could debate with the sages of bygone days. There was no barrier between the past and the present.... They did not know how to take anything for granted. Everything had to have a reason, and they were more interested in reasons than in things. Ideas were like precious stones. The thought that animated them reflected a wealth of nuances and distinctions, as the ray of light passing through a prism produces the colors of the rainbow. 54

The passage, I think, is a wonderful portrayal of the beauty and vitality that can exist in a scholastic dialectical tradition. If I have failed to impart to the reader this sense of beauty and

vigor as it exists in the case of Buddhist scholasticism it is due to no fault of the tradition but only, in Santideva's * words, to "my own lack of skill in composition."

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Chapter 5
The Authority of Scripture 1

And thus,... he [reflects] upon reality with the wisdom which comes from consideration, and with logic and scripture as his guide, he meditates upon the true nature of reality.
Kamalasila2

In the three previous chapters we discussed the nature and locus of scripture, Buddhist notions of truth, the reconciliation of scriptural inconsistencies, and questions concerning the validity of commentary. In the present chapter we turn our attention to the question of scriptural authority. Together with sacrality it is the feature that many scholars consider the "most essential" of all of the attributes of religious texts.3 The authoritative quality of sacred texts is, without a doubt, one of their most important characteristics, a feature that in most instances distinguishes them from their secular counterparts.

Throughout its history there has been a tendency in Buddhist studies to portray as minimal the role scriptural authority and tradition play in Buddhism. As one of the more recent examples of this attitude we find David Kalupahana's reading of Buddhism as a pseudo-positivism in which tradition plays essentially no role and in which the Buddha's enlightenment itself, far from being the result of countless eons of exposure to the Dharma as preached by the buddhas of bygone ages (a tenet common both to the Mahayana* and to Early Buddhism),4 becomes a case of his having fortuitously stumbled upon the truth, much as a scientist would. In his Nagarjuna*: *The Philosophy of*

the Middle Way, Kalupahana states, "It is true that the Buddha attained enlightenment and freedom by sheer accident. This is why he was reluctant to recognize any teacher." 5

Now it must be admitted, as we have mentioned earlier, that there is a strong empiricist tendency in Buddhism. This cannot be denied. However, to characterize the Buddha's insight as a sheer accident is to misrepresent the tradition. It is to overlook the strong perennial element within Buddhism, one that conceives of the Buddha Sakyamuni's* teaching as one among an infinite number of cases of the Dharma's having been preached to humankind. It is, in effect, to devalue the role of tradition.

As early as the eleventh century, European scholastics were beginning to debate the issue of scriptural authority. What role were scripture and reason to play in religious understanding? The eleventh century saw both extreme and moderate answers to this question. On the one hand, there is what we might call the dogmatic stance, a position that saw little use for philosophical reasoning. For Manegold of Lautenbach (d. 1103), for example, philosophy is superfluous.6 Berengar of Tours (d. 1088), on the other hand, represents the other extreme, holding the position that reason was sufficient, and it appears that he abandonded tradition as a source of knowledge altogether. At the same time there emerged, perhaps in part as a response to these extreme positions, a series of more moderate works that attempted to take both reason and the authority of scripture-tradition seriously, a characteristic (some have claimed *the defining characteristic)* of later medieval European scholasticism. This moderate position is perhaps best exemplified by Lanfranc (d.1089), the teacher of Anselm (1033-1109).

In this chapter we shall explore the role that tradition, especially as embodied in scripture, plays in Mahayana* scholasticism.7 Though couched in a slightly different way, it will become evident that this same tension between scripture and reason finds expression in the scholastic philosophy of India and Tibet. In a Buddhist context the question becomes whether or not scripture can act as a source of proof for doctrine. On the one hand, we find at the theoretical level, when scripture itself becomes

the object of inquiry, an attempt to limit the extent to which holy writ can be used as a source of knowledge, for Buddhist scholastics felt that inference, as the paradigm of valid knowledge, should be able to prove the vast majority of religious truths. On the other hand, when it comes to the actual practice of philosophical discourse, we find that scripture plays an extremely important role. Hence, in practice, if not in theory, the authority of scripture has always been upheld, to such an extent in fact that we might almost describe the scholastic position as "fundamentalist" in character. As regards the completeness and inerrancy of scripture and as regards its ability to prove points of doctrine, the position of this tradition is at times as radical as that of American fundamentalists such as Archibald Alexander Hodge or B. B. Warfield. 8 We must emphasize, however, that even the most "theologically" conservative movements in the Mahayana* never revert to a type of fundamentalism that opts for a literal reading of the canon, one unmediated by tradition.9 Much of what the scholastics have to say about scripture demonstrates both its importance to the tradition and the high esteem in which it was held. This of course vitiates against a naive view in which Buddhism is characterized as a purely empirical science that takes no stock of scripture and tradition.

Not only do scholastic philosophers consider scriptures to be authoritative, as we have seen, they also consider them to be compact and complete.10 In the Tibetan sources we find two notions of completeness. The weaker one states that the corpus of the Buddha's words contains every doctrine that is soteriologically necessary, that nothing relevant to the task of liberation is omitted. The stronger thesis maintains that not only religiously valid doctrines but that *every phenomenon* has been taught by the Buddhathat nothing exists that the Buddha did not teach. As we saw in Chapter Three, the Buddha's word was also characterized as inerrant (*avisamvada**, *mi slu ba*), which is to say "true" in its entirety,11 at least in the pragmatic sense of the term. This last assertion meant that the tradition had to resort to different hermeneutical strategies to reconcile contradictions in doctrines whose practical efficacy, by fiat by virtue of the presupposition that they were the Buddha'scould never

be challenged. Having treated the questions of completeness and inerrancy earlier we now focus on the authority of scripture; that is, on the set of issues surrounding the question of scripture as a source of proof.

I. What the Question of Scriptural Authority Does Not Entail

Before discussing the scope of the problem of scriptural authority in Buddhism, it is worth our while to briefly examine what the problem *does not* entail. Many of our notions concerning scripture as a source of religious authority are, understandably, influenced by presuppositions that arise out of the study of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Despite the fact that much of the scholarship concerning this question in theistic settings is quite relevant to the Buddhist case, much is not. It is important, therefore, to gain a clear understanding early on of where notions that are the legacy of theistically based scholarship are relevant and where they are not.

In theism there is a clear link between the revealed character of scripture, the inspired nature of holy writ, and its authority. Inspiration and revelation imply the existence of an agent, transcendental in character, that inspires and reveals. A principal, if not *the* principal, reason behind the authoritative quality of religious texts in such traditions lies in the fact that the source of scripture is extraordinary. When the question of scriptural authority comes up in the scholastic texts of Indian Buddhism, however, it does not focus on issues such as inspiration and revelation. 12 This is not to say that, especially in the Mahayana*, there is no notion of revelation. Asanga's* quest for a vision of the Buddha Maitreya and the subsequent revelation of the five treatises to him is proof enough of the fact that such a notion is more than operative in the tradition. Nonetheless, in no meaningful way can we say that the tradition accepts the Buddha's understanding as having been "revealed" to him. What is more, even in the cases in the history of Buddhism where doctrine can be said to have been revealed by a supramundane power, this is not considered sufficient to establish the authority of the text, if,

following the Pramanikas *, we mean by a text's authority its ability to prove doctrine.

William Graham has suggested a parallel between divine inspiration or revelation in theistic settings and the experience of ultimate reality in the Buddhist case.13 The proposal is an interesting one, but the implied isomorphism between divine inspiration and experience is problematic. The Buddha's enlightenment is not considered the primary source of the doctrine. If anything, the tradition seems to stress the converse: doctrine as the source of enlightenment. When we examine the rhetoric on this subject we often come across a notion of doctrine as preexistent and antecedent to the experience of enlightenment. At other times it is portrayed as concommitant with the enlightenment itself. As we saw in Chapter Two, for many Buddhists experience and doctrine qua scripture were considered two sides of the same coin. This of course vitiates against the claim that experience is the unique and original source of scripture. Rather than the unidirectional causal relationship suggested by Graham experience as the source of scripturethe texts of Buddhist scholasticism seem to suggest two alternative models. The first of these stresses a quasi-identity of scripture and experience; and the other is dialectical, where doctrine serves as the cause of enlightenment, which then serves as a further cause of doctrine and so forth, neither ever acting as first cause.

Neither can the Buddha's experience of reality be conceived of as the psychological motivation that causes the Buddha to engage in the act of teaching the overpowering force that impels him to share his insight with the world. That the experience of reality is neutral in this regard is witnessed by the fact that the tradition maintains that there are world systems and epochs in which Buddhas become enlightened and do not teach. It is also worth remembering in this regard that after his enlightenment the Buddha spent a period of time pondering the question of whether or not he should teach. Finally, an act of will on his part (motivated, according to the tradition, by compassion and the urgings of the god Brahma*) caused him to begin to preach the Dharma. Rather than either enlightenment or the experience of reality, it is most often compassion that the

texts usually point to as the primary factor motivating the Buddha's teaching.

What is perhaps more to the point, however, is that when the tradition begins to examine the role that scripture plays in proving doctrine, when it becomes self-conscious of the issue of scriptural authority, only in a limited way does it conceive of the Buddha's experience of reality (as set forth in scripture) as a source meant to establish the truth of Buddhist tenets. At least according to the Pramanikas * who consider the question, in the validation of doctrine as a whole rarely is there an appeal to experience (the way there is an appeal to the inspired nature of scripture in theistic settings).14 This is a crucial, and often misunderstood, point. Doctrine is believed to be validated primarily in other ways (either through the senses or through inference) and not by appeal either to experience or to the status of the person expounding the doctrine.15 In short, the suggestion that there is an isomorphic relationship between inspiration in theistic traditions and experience in Buddhism is a problematic one. What is perhaps most important in this regard is that when the Buddhist tradition *itself* discusses the question of scriptural authority, the Buddha's experience of enlightenment rarely comes up as a subject.

The question of scriptural authority sometimes brings to mind another issue, the question of scripture vs. tradition, that is, the extent to which scripture stands alone as a source of meaning for individuals, and the extent to which its meaning must be interpreted by tradition in order to assure validity and authoritativeness.16 In the Christian West this was of course a major issue especially from the Reformation onward, when holy writ, unmediated by ecclesiastical authority, was set forth as a sufficient guide for the faithful. In the history of Buddhism the issue was not unknown: the Sautrantika* critique of the Abhidharma tradition may well have been a stance similar to the Protestant *sola scriptura* position, a plea for returning to the original gospel of the founder. As we saw in Chapter Two, however, Mahayana* scholastics have been less preoccupied with the critique of scriptures and canons qua historical works than with their reinterpretation through the skillful use of

hermeneutical strategies. That there has been no major push back to the original words of the founder in Buddhist scholasticism is a curious fact, which might be accounted for in various ways. From the earliest history of scholasticism as a philosophical movement in Indian Buddhism, exegesis was both sufficiently abundant and sufficiently diverse to vitiate against the claims (a) that the tradition of scriptural commentary was unnecessary and (b) that any one tradition was *the exclusive* heir to the Buddha's insight. Though there has always existed a rhetoric of exclusivity when it comes to the exposition of doctrinal views, the fact that the position of rival philosophical theories were rarely dismissed as heretical but were instead couched in a hierarchy of truth depending on their proximity to the views of the systematizer is proof of the fact that the different schools readily accepted both the existence and (at least at some level) the validity of divergent exegetical traditions. Hence, the sheer size and diversity of the Buddhist canon and the variety of postcanonical literature, combined with the fact that the doctrine of skillful means prohibited Mahayana * scholastics from considering any portion of the canon and the exegetical literature as soteriologically irrelevant, meant that it was impossible to simply discard a portion of the exegetical tradition, much less tradition in its entirety. We must also remember that many of the early Mahayana* suttras* and satras*, far from being written in the accessible narrative style of the Pall Nikayas*, were often extremely terse and enigmatic. Traditional scholars to this day consider it unthinkable to approach the works of Nagarjuna* or Maitreya without the aid of both oral and written commentary. It is no wonder then that from very early times we should find a variety of exegetical material that, though not strictly canonical, came to possess the status and popularity of the more strictly canonical literature.17

Finally, the question of scriptural authority in Western theistic settings sometimes brings to mind what has come to be called *the evidentialist controversy*. The claim by some scholars and theologians that all beliefs (including religious ones) must be substantiated by evidence (reason) to be considered valid has been challenged widely, especially in recent years. We find

this critique of the evidentialist position in various forms. 18 in the writings of Pascal, William James, and most recently, Alvin Plantinga.19 The "anti-evidentialists," as they are called, claim that there are a wide range of beliefs (many religious beliefs among them) that are so fundamental as to require no validation through reasoning. George Mavrodes characterizes the position as the claim that "theistic faith is not to be made rational [since] it is already rational, just as it stands."20 Some of these authors then see scripture (or revelation) as being a sufficient source for the validation of these beliefs.21 In the case of Buddhist scholasticism, however, no belief is ever considered so basic as to be exempt from having to be validated through direct perception or inference. In the few cases where scripture *is* relied upon to validate certain doctrinal points, it is not because they are considered so basic as to be beyond the need for verification. On the contrary, it is because they are beyond empirical and rational reachin the sense of being extremely obtusethat the tradition turns to scripture as a last resort.

II. The Question in the Context of Scholastic Buddhism

Now that we have eliminated the relevance of certain issues to the discussion of the authority of scripture in Buddhist scholasticism and have shown that certain presuppositions are actually antithetical to such a discussion, it remains incumbent upon us to identify those issues that *do* fall within the purview of the present discussion. Put briefly, the question of the authority of scripture in Mahayana* scholasticism (and more specifically within the Pramanika* tradition) is an epistemological one. The question becomes one concerning the nature of valid knowledge, and specifically whether or not scripture can act as a valid source of such knowledge. This is a curious question because the scholastics, as we have seen, have always maintained that an understanding of the doctrine through the study of the Buddha's word is an essential prerequisite for enlightenment. The question was not, therefore, a challenge to the scholastic tradition's most essential premise, that discourse (exegetical and otherwise) is essential to spiritual progress. The question was in

a sense more subtle and fundamental than this. It concerned whether the mere hearing or reading of a scriptural passage is sufficient to elicit true knowledge (pramana *) within the mind of the disciple, or whether true knowledge really involves more than the understanding of words (scriptural or otherwise).22 Historically, then, we find the question of sabdapramana* (the validity of scripture as a source of knowledge), as it is called, as an issue in Buddhist *epistemological* theory and for this reason it becomes necessary to contextualize it within the discussion of the theory of valid knowledge.23

III. Valid Forms of Knowledge (pramana*)

A pramana* is defined as a fresh and unmistaken cognition,24 that is, new and valid knowledge. Dignaga* and Dharmakirti*, the founders of the Buddhist Pramanika* tradition, never denied that many thoughts were nonmistaken, but the type of valid knowledge that pramanas* possess is in some sense special. Pramanas* are said to be apodictic in a way that most forms of (even non-mistaken) consciousness are not. They impart to those who have them a kind of unswerving certainty that can never be overturned as long as the pramana* is operative. Therefore, it must be realized that when the Pramanikas* deny the fact that scripture is the source of such certaintywhen they deny that merely reading scripture can lead to the acquisition of a pramana* in regard to the subject matter of the scripture they are not denying that the reader may come to some generally correct understanding of the doctrines being expounded when they read a text or hear a sermon. What they are challenging is the fact that the understanding generated from scripture or testimony is apodictic, that it is true knowledge of the best kind. Briefly, then, reading and studying scripture *is* a necessary part of the spiritual process that culminates in enlightenment. It does lead to knowledge. However, it alone does *not* provide valid knowledge (pramana*), a kind of knowledge that is irreversible and that cannot be overturned.25

Although certain schools of Indian philosophy have maintained the existence of a variety of valid forms of knowledge,26

Buddhists (at least since the time of Dignaga * when this became an overt issue for Buddhist scholastics) have posited only two pramanas*: direct sense perception (pratyaksa*) and inference (anumana*).27 The Buddhist Pramanikas* have, with the Vaisesikas* and against the Advaita and Mimamsaka* schools of Indian philosophy, rejected the understanding of scriptural testimony (sabda*) as a third pramana*.28 It is interesting that in certain schools of Islam we find mention of three "sources of knowledge": nature, history, and *prophecy*. They are considered sources of knowledge in the sense that they can lead the believer to an understanding of the greatness of God.29 In Muslim law (shari'ah*), the twelfth century scholar Ibn Rushd identifies four sources of the law: the Qur'an*, the *saanah* of the prophet, consensus (ijma'*), and deductive reasoning, which he says "consists of drawing analogous conclusions (qiyas*) from the other three sources, the Book, the example of the prophet and consensus."30 As is well known, Augustine, following the Platonic tradition, posited two types of knowledge: intellection and sense experience. For Augustine and the scholastics who followed his Platonic epistemology, intellection understood abtract forms or ideas, abstractions that were more real than external particulars. For this reason the intellect or conceptual thought represented a higher form of knowledge than sense perception. We shall see that the Buddhist epistemologi-cal tradition, discussed more fully in the next chapter, reverses this hierarchy of knowledge.

The Buddhist rejection of scripture as pramana* was in part due to a kind of minimalist philosophical pride.31 The idea was one along the lines of Occam's razor: how much more aesthetically pleasing is an epistemology that can subsume all forms of valid knowledge into only two categories. Hence, the Pramanika's* enterprise was in part directed at demonstrating how the other pramanas* of the various Indian philosophical systems could be reduced either to direct sense perception or to inferencehow there was really no need to consider them distinct categories of knowledge. This fact, as we shall see, becomes quite relevant to the Pramanika* repudiation of scripture as a valid source of knowledge.

IV. Three Types of Facts and the Pramanas * that Prove Them

In his Kitab* *al-Funun*, the eleventh century Muslim scholar Ibn 'Aqil suggests that doctrine is of three kinds: "that which may be known by reason to the exclusion of scripture, that which may be known only through scripture, and that which may be known by both together."32 Taking a slightly different stance, Maimonides (1135-1204) restricted Aristotelian philosophy to worldly matters and claimed that the knowledge of what was beyond the world, God, had to be gained from scripture.33 Buddhist scholastics also divided doctrinal, and indeed all, facts according to the kind of knowledge used to prove them, though they did so in a manner that once again differed slightly from both Ibn 'Aqil and Maimonides. The Tibetan exegetical literature, following certain leads in the Indian commentaries on the Pramanavarttika* (PV) of Dharmakirti*,34 states that the Pramanikas* consider all phenomena, all facts, to be divided into three categories: evident phenomena or facts (pratyaksa*, *mngon gyur*), slightly hidden facts (paroksa*, *cung zad Ikog gyur*), and extremely hidden facts (atyantaparoksa*, *shin tu lkog gyur*).35 Evident facts are points that can be apprehended directly by sense perception. The existence of the book before you at this moment is an evident fact. It can be verified through direct perception (sight). Slightly hidden facts are points that cannot be directly perceived through the senses but that instead require conceptual cogitation, and specifically the kind of conceptual thought that we call inference. Hence, the fact of the mortality of living beings, the fact of their impermanence and their emptiness are all slightly hidden points. They can be ascertained, but only through inference and not simply through the senses. Finally, there are extremely hidden points that can be ascertained neither through the senses nor through deductive reasoning.36 The fact that charity in this life brings wealth in the next (*byin pas glong spyod*) is the classical example of such a point.37 It is a fact beyond the ken of the senses and of deductive reasoning. These, however, are the only two forms of pramanas*, and yet Dharmakirti* claims that every phenomenon (every fact,

including extremely hidden points,) should be ascertainable by a pramana *.38 Enter scripture!

The tradition here claims that there is another form of inference called inference *based on trustworthy testimony* (*yid ches rjes dpag*), and these most subtle points of doctrine that can be established by neither sense perception nor deductive reasoning can be ascertained in reliance upon scripture.39

IV. The Circumscription of Scripture as a Source of Proof

At this point we seem to have arrived at an impasse. On the one hand, Buddhists reject the notion that scripture can generate truly valid knowledge. On the other, there is the assertion that in the case of extremely subtle facts trustworthy testimony, that is, scriptural testimony (the Buddha's word), can be used as a basis on which to infer that these facts are true. The textual sources are not unaware of this dilemma. Let us summarize the argument as it appears in the Pramanavarttika* of Dharmakirti*. In what follows I have relied both on the Sanskrit and Tibetan versions of the Svarthanumana* chapter of PV with its *Autocommentary* (Vrtti*),40 on the Sanskrit commentaries of Manorathanandin and Karnakagomin*, and on the Tibetan dGe lugs pa commentaries of rGyal tshab Dar marin chen41 (1364-1432) and mKhas grub dGe legs dpal bzang42 (1385-1438).

The argument originates in polemics concerning the way in which a Buddhist is to refute the existence of entities that, though perhaps accepted by an opponent, are repudiated by Buddhists entities like God, certain kinds of universals, and so forth. In other words, the discussion occurs in the context of the topic of how we come to know that something does not exist. An opponent states that, because scripture expresses all truths,43 a fact's being in opposition to scripture should be sufficient to allow us to reject it. Though couched in negative terms (concerning disproof and the rejection of propositions), the opponent's claim is nonetheless tantamount to the claim that scripture can act as a source of valid knowledge. The Tibetan commentator, rGyal tshab rje, glosses the passage describing the opponent's position as follows:

> one can understand something to be nonexistent (simply) by virtue of its being contrary to scripture (*lung*), for scripture possesses everything as its object. Thus, scripture becomes a valid reason on the basis of which one can come to understand the (meaning) that (its words) express. 44

The response to the opponent's challenge is a curious one. As we have seen, the Pramanikas* never reject the completeness of scripture (the fact that there is nothing it does not express) nor its accuracy (that it is always true, at least in the pragmatic sense described previously). If they cannot, therefore, attack the *qualities* of scripture as a means of challenging its authority, they must do so by attacking *its very nature as language*, and this is exactly what we find. Scripture, they state, cannot be used as a source on the basis of which to reject (or to prove) a point because words cannot prove or disprove anything. This is because "there is no essential (*med du mi 'byung ba'i*) connection between the fact and that which the words express, the latter being [only an image] that is conceptualized [when the words are spoken]."45

We must interject at this point a note on the Pramanikas'* theory of meaning.46 Dharmakirti's* theory of meaning is not a realistic denotative theory in which the meaning of a word is the real thing (or situation) to which it points. The meaning of a word is not the thing that it names. Words do have meanings, however, but instead of being real particulars (svalaksana*), the meanings of words are images (pratibhasa*), the mental pictures that the words elicit in the conceptual thought of the listener.47

The argument can now be reformulated as follows. Scripture is not authoritative because it cannot act as a source of proof for that which it expresses, such as the fact that wealth in a future life arises from charity in the present one. It cannot be a source of proof because it is a form of language, and language cannot prove facts. Only facts can prove facts. Language cannot prove facts because there is no essential connection between language and facts; and that essential connection is impossible because what language meanswhat it points toare conceptual images, not real situations.48

It is interesting, though not surprising, that the Pramanikas * should have resorted to their theory of meaning in dealing with the question of scriptural authority. Questions of scripture, language, and epistemology are often intertwined in the works of Mahayana* scholastics. In this particular case, however, we have shown that other means of countering the authority of scripture (challenges to completeness and accuracy) were not alternatives. Hence, if the *qualities* of scripture could not be questioned, then its very *nature* as functioning language was the only other possible means of challenging its authority. In brief, scripture is not considered a source of valid knowledge because language, the stuff of which scripture is made, functions to point to the mental images of its users and not to actual states of affairs.

Althought scripture is not a source of valid knowledge of the facts that it expresses, that is, of its content, for a scholastic it can obviously not be epsitemologically superfluous. It must therefore be said to induce valid knowledge of something else, if not of its content. Although it lacks the ability to prove doctrine, scripture *is* a source of valid knowledge of something else. Words in general, and scripture in particular, are valid sources for gaining knowledge, not of the facts that they express, but of the *intention*, *of the thoughts*, *of the speaker* (vaktrabhipraya*).49 Therefore, although it may not be possible to say that things are impermanent because the Buddha said they were, it *is* possible to claim that the Buddha *thought* they were impermanent because he said they were.50 This turn is interesting because it anticipates many of the hermeneutical questions that concern contemporary scholars of literary criticism.51 Though of interest, especially to the student of comparative religious hermeneutics, we refrain here from further exploring this point and instead return to the train of the original argument.

At this point an opponent raises the following, somewhat ironic, objection. It is ironic because it charges Dharmakirti* with contradicting a scriptural passage from Dignaga*, one that states:

> Trustworthy words are inerrant;
> They are a form of inductive inference.52

If scripture is not a source of valid knowledge, asks the opponent, then why did Dignaga * call it a form of inference?

rGyal tshab Dar marin chen suggests the following response to the opponent: "Although he [Dignaga*] did state that scripture is a valid source of knowledge [in this passage], he was not referring to just any scripture, [but to] the trustworthy words of the Buddha that teach extremely hidden points."53 His strategy is to limit the cases in which scriptural authority comes into play by claiming that only in regard to extremely hidden points can the Buddha's word act as a source of valid knowledge.54 Aquinas, the quintessential Christian scholastic, attempted to delimit the sphere of the activity of reason and create for revelation a distinct competence to act as a source of knowledge in the case of certain doctrines that he believed were beyond the ken of human reason.55 The Buddhist scholastic approach to the issue of scriptural authority is just the opposite: to minimize scripture's sphere of activity as an epistemological source by limiting its probative power to the smallest possible set of doctrinal tenets. How can one know that in the cases of extremely hidden points of doctrine scripture is inerrant (*mi slu ba*)? This can be inferred inductively. The position is this: because the less subtle points of doctrine (the evident and the slightly hidden facts) can be validated (either through direct sense perception or through ordinary deductive inference), one can assume, inductively, that the very subtle points are also accurate. In other words, rGyal tshab claims that we can assume the Buddha's teaching to be accurate in regard to extremely hidden facts because his more general teachings concerning less subtle doctrines have always proven to be accurate. If we know that the Buddha's word can be trusted in these more obvious cases, so the argument goes, why should we doubt what scripture has to say in the few instances where the teachings cannot be verified through direct means?

We saw in our discussion of the definition of a treatise (sastra*) in Chapter One that not any text is considered a valid scriptural treatise. The work must meet very stringent criteria. It must be devoid of the kinds of grammatical faults that would make the work unintelligible. It must not be a work that teaches

a faulty method for achieving a desired purpose (a method that is inconsistent with the goal). Finally, it must be a work that teaches a purpose worth achieving. 56 This is the first set of prerequisites. In addition, for a scripture to be considered a valid source of knowledge of extremely hidden points it must be a scripture that meets three other requirements. It must pass the test of the "three forms of analysis." rGyal tshab rje states: "Not any scripture can act as the source of valid proof of the doctrine that it teaches; it is only those scriptures that have been purified by means of the three forms of analysis (*dpyad pa gsum gyis dag pa*) that can be taken as valid sources of knowledge."57 The three tests that a scripture must pass are the qualities that actually make it a valid source of knowledge (*tshad ma yin pa'i rgyu mtshan*):

1. that the evident points it teaches not be contradicted by direct sense perception,
2. that the slightly hidden points that it teaches not be contradicted by deductive inference,58
3. that the extremely hidden points that it teaches be internally consistent, both implicitly and explicitly.

The first two constraints assure Buddhists that by taking scripture as valid testimony they are not departing from the conviction that the two pramanas*, sense perception and inference, are *the* guiding principles as regards validity. For a scripture to be valid it cannot contradict what can be perceived through the senses or what we can infer through logic. The third criterion states that, even if the extremely hidden points taught by a scripture cannot be verified through independent means, they must at least not contradict each other nor the less subtle points of doctrine. Such stringent criteria implied that the scriptures that were potential sources of valid knowledge were extremely rare.

In brief, scripture was considered authoritative (by which we mean that it was admitted as proof of doctrine) only in the case of extremely hidden points of doctrine. Second, even in this case, its ability to act as a source of verification for those

points was not something that the scholastics believed could be posited without some justification: it needed to be validated through the inductive argument discussed previously. The purpose of these stringent conditions should be clear. By limiting the kinds of scriptures that could be considered authoritative and the instances of their use, and by providing justification for relying on scriptural authority as proof, even in these limited cases, the Pramanikas * and their Tibetan exponents are attempting to uphold an empirico-rationalist epistemology that gives precedence to direct sense perception and inference. This, of course, is consonant with the generally non-dogmatic flavor of Buddhism and the scholastic tradition in particular.

We must reemphasize that what is at issue here is not the validity of scripture in general but the question of whether scripture can generate the kind of certainty that would be required of it were it a source of valid knowledge. The Indo-Tibetan tradition in particular goes to great lengths to emphasize this distinction, the basic idea being that knowledge of scripture is both useful and necessary but not sufficient in its apodicticity. The situation might be compared to the difference between hearsay and direct testimony in a juridical setting. As we saw in Chapter Two, Vasubandhu, in the Abhidharmakosabhasya*, distinguishes between the wisdom born from listening, which he says "arises from trustworthy scripture as a source of knowledge" (*apta* vacanapramanyajata*), and that born from thinking, which he says "arises from logical analysis" (yuktinidhyanaja*).59 Whereas Vasubandhu considers both the wisdom born from listening and that born from thinking to be forms of ascertainment (niscaya*), this is something that most Tibetan scholars are loathe to do. For example, mKhas grub rje refuses to consider the knowledge that is born from listening to the words of one's spiritual master (at least when they deal with the doctrine of emptiness, a slightly hidden phenomenon) anything more than "a belief that is aroused by faith."60 He states that, "this is not a full-blown ascertaining consciousness. Were it such, then it would have to arise from either of the two sources of valid knowledge, and it does not." That the "faith" aroused in disciples when they listen to the words of their master is

inferior to the true ascertainment born from logical examination is, he says, borne out by the fact that "when these disciples generate faith in another spiritual master's tenets which do not accord with [those of] the first, once again, under the power of the words alone, they abandon their previous false certainty." 61 Contrary to Augustine and Anselm, for Buddhist scholastics faiththat is, faith untempered by reasoned inquiryis not a precondition for understanding. In fact, such faith itself represents a lower form of understanding, one that is unstable and easily overturned. If there *is* a precondition for understanding, rather it is doubt.

This tendency to associate mere verbal understanding with the way of the inferior disciple and with an unstable faith has Indian roots. It is a doctrine found, for example, in Haribhadra's discussion of the preamble to the Abhisamayalamkara* (in his commentary, the Sphutartha*) as well as in the accompanying Tibetan exegetical literature. Haribhadra distinguishes two kinds of disciples based on the way they react to the homage at the beginning of the Abhisamayalamkara*. He states:

> When they have heard this [stanza] some [disciples], the followers of faith, generate extreme yearning for [the text] quickly and without doubt. The disciples who follow the Dharma, [on the other hand, do initially generate doubt but they resolve it]... through valid knowledge [pramana*].... Seeing no contradiction... they come to a state in which they no longer doubt.... Understanding this, they generate extreme yearning for [the text].62

Hence, inferior disciples, often characterized as being of relatively dull mental faculties (*dbang po rtul po*), generate a faith that is fragile, because it arises from simply hearing the words of scripture. On the other hand, those who follow the Dharma (as opposed to the followers of the words of an individual), the superior disciples of keen mental faculties (*dbang po rnon po*), *do* first generate doubt. In resolving the doubt through valid knowledge, however, they come to generate a much more stable faith that cannot be overturned. It is interesting to note that Averroes (= Ibn Rushd), the great Spanish Muslim commentator on Aristotle, distinguished not two but three classes of indi-

viduals: the ordinary person who becomes convinced of a position by the literal words of scripture, the moderately educated person (dialectician or theologian) who can be convinced by arguments that are "probable and persuasive," and the person of great intellect (the philosopher) who requires absolute proof. 63

By considering the epistemic states of those who engage in the rational analysis of the content of scripture superior to those who generate instantaneous faith based on the mere words of the text, we have in the Sphutartha* another instance in which scripture's ability to serve as a source of valid knowledge is brought into question. Because the words of the text are, by themselves, incapable of generating certainty, the faith concomitant with such knowledge can be considered only inferior.

In a wide variety of textual settings, therefore, do we notice this tendency to place scripture in a position that is inferior to the truly empirical forms of valid knowledge, sense perception and inference. Its use is limited to those few instances in which the two pramanas* cannot function; namely, in the validation of extremely hidden points. The nature of the scripture that is to serve as verification of these points is qualified by, and indeed partially defined in terms of, the other two pramanas*: it can not contradict either of them. Even in the few instances when scripture *is* allowed, there is an attempt to make of the use of scripture just another case of inference, by defending its validity inductively in an argument that presupposes the validity of all those scriptural points that *can* be verified, again, by the two true pramanas* Vasubandhu, though describing them both as forms of ascertainment, considers the knowledge gained from listening to or reading scripture to be preliminary to that gained from subjecting it to logical examination. However, mKhas grub rje rejects the idea that the knowledge gained from listening to one's master is a form of ascertainment at all. For him, this type of knowledge is something that can be easily overturned. Finally, in the discussion of the two methods of generating faith, we find, again, a hierarchical ordering of the intellectual faculties of disciples based on whether they generate faith in a text upon simply hearing its words (the inferior ones) or after subjecting the contents to logical analysis (the

superior ones). This of course implicitly places scripture in a position inferior to logic, that is, to inference, as a source of knowledge.

V. The Reasons for Limiting Scripture's Role in Proving Doctrine

We have seen that, in a wide variety of texts of the Indo-Tibetan Mahayana * scholastic tradition, there is a clear tendency to delimit the authority of scripture by bringing into question the validity of scripture as a source of valid knowledge. That Buddhists have this allergy to using scripture as a source of proof for doctrine is of course an interesting fact. *Why* they have this allergy is an even more interesting question. Let me suggest three reasons why this might be so.

The first I have alluded to previously. Buddhism is, in many ways, a minimalist religion. Even though philosophical concepts and categories have at times run rampant, there has always been a repeated historical tendency to curtail the categories, to trim the lists and bring a halt to the proliferation of metaphysical concepts. For this reason alone it is not surprising to find the Buddhist Pramanikas* refusing to expand the list of forms of valid knowledge beyond the two most basic ones: direct perception and inference.

We must also realize that Buddhism arose, historically, as a challenge to a Brahmanic dogmatism that characterized the Vedas as absolutely authoritative. The critique of Vedic dogmatism, in my view, imprinted upon the Buddhist tradition a skepticism in regard to the authority of scripturea skepticism that eventually came to be directed even at their own scriptural tradition. What is more, when Buddhists were themselves questioning the validity of the Vedas, it was hardly possible for them to claim the same authority of their own texts that were, compared to the Vedas, relative newcomers to the scriptural scene.

Finally, it seems to me that a tradition's vision of its founder does affect the extent to which it considers his or her words to

be authoritative. The fact that in early Buddhism the Buddha was considered a human being (an enlightened human being, but human nonetheless) has left an indelible mark on the Buddhist tradition as a whole and of course on its perception of scripture. The Buddha himself never claimed divine status and actually discouraged his followers from accepting his doctrines based simply on the fact that he was an enlightened being. These two facts have left an empiricist and pragmatic imprint on the tradition that is reflected in its attitude toward scripture, even to the present day.

VI. Scriptural Authority: Theory vs. Practice

However, the fact that *at the level of theory* the authority of scripture has been severely restricted by the tradition does not mean that *in practice* this is the case. That scripture has been variously used as a source of proof by Christian theologians is a fact amply documented in David Kelsey's *The Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology*. 64 Though this is undoubtedly also true of the Buddhist tradition, and although a study the likes of Kelsey's would be a great contribution to the field of Buddhist studies, my purpose here is not to make such a claim. I want to suggest, instead, something more general; namely, that the theory concerning the uses of scriptural authority does not coincide with the practice. We have seen how, in the speculation regarding the issue of scriptural authority, the validity of scripture as a source of proof is severely restricted through different (both explicit and implicit) means. This perception of the limited role that scripture can and should play in proving doctrinal points has not, however, been inherited by the scholastic tradition in its practice of philosophical speculation.

In both the written and oral exposition of doctrine we find that the great figures in the scholastic movement, past and present, resort to scripture repeatedly to give weight to their arguments. Now it might be argued that citing a scriptural source to bolster an argument already set forth through other more empirical means is not strictly speaking the use of scripture as a form of proof, and this is true. Often, however, we find that one

or more scriptural passages are cited as a way of discounting the philosophical views of an adversary whose position is contradicted by the passages. In a great many cases, therefore, it is not so much that a scriptural passage is cited as *proof* of one's own doctrinal position as it is that scriptural passages can be marshalled *to disprove* the doctrines of an opponent. On the surface it may appear as though the negative act of disproving the doctrines of others through the use of scripture is different from the positive act of using holy writ to validate one's own doctrinal tenets. The distinction, however, is a semantic one, for to exclude all doctrines that are inconsistent with scripture (or with one's own interpretation of scripture) is tantamount to allowing only those tenets that are consistent with it, thereby implicitly making scripture the basis of philosophical truth.

Where the use of scripture is perhaps the most dogmatic, however, is in the tradition of Tibetan scholastic debate (*rtsod pa*). As we have mentioned in Chapter Four, this is a stylized technique of dialectical disputation practiced in the monasteries of Tibet in which a questioner makes assertions backed up by reasons that must fulfill certain "formal" properties, while a respondent, with only four possible answers, must defend the thesis in question. In scholastic disputation it is commonplace to cite a scriptural source as proof for a point that one is attempting to establish, regardless of whether or not it is an extremely hidden point. In this regard, a variety of formulaic expressions accompany the citation of a scriptural source. In one of the most common, the questioner will claim that a certain point is true because "the glorious, worthy, and incomparable scholar X has said so;" this litany will then be followed by a recitation of the relevant passage. The person answering, the respondent, then has the option of challenging the questioner's use of scripture in a variety of ways. One can, for example, attempt to show that the cited passage has been taken out of context or that it has been misinterpreted by the questioner. In no case, however, will anyone ever seriously challenge the very *fact* that scripture is being used to prove a doctrinal point, 65 *despite the fact that theoretically speaking* one *would be in the right.* The few times I have seen this done on the debate court-

yard it has usually been as a last resort, accompanied by a knowing smile of defeat, and it has brought on the laughter of all present. Hence, in the practice of Tibetan debate only the inter*pretation* of a scriptural passage can be seriously brought into question, never its ability to act as proof of doctrine.

VII. Conclusion

We have seen that the question of scriptural authority in Buddhist scholasticism is essentially an epistemological question, that it involves the issue of whether scripture can be considered a source of certainty. We have seen that, for various reasons, the tradition of Buddhist scholasticism has been very reticent about allowing the use of scripture as a source of proof and hence of admitting the possibility of its being a source of valid knowledge. Nonetheless, it is clear that such theoretical restrictions have had very little impact on the way that Buddhist philosophy is actually practiced. In spite of limitations at the level of theory, Buddhist philosophers obviously perceive scripture, and continue to use it, in ways that resemble more "dogmatic" traditions. We must conclude, it seems to me, at least in the Buddhist case examined here but perhaps more widely, that from the self-reflective speculation that constitutes a tradition's attempt at understanding its own method there often emerges a rhetoric with little relationship to the reality of what is actually practiced, the former being instead based on other, more theoretical, concerns that, being the essence of a tradition's self-assessment and self-perception, come to supersede a more empirical approach. It is equally clear that this rhetoric comes to have very little effect on the way that philosophical or theological method is actually practiced thereafter. Though the self-conscious willingness to accept scripture as a source of authority may vary from one religious tradition to the next, it may be that the way (or ways) scripture is used in practice, in a community of believers, is tradition invariant. In the end, even in a tradition that finds anathema the kind of dogmatism that allows for the possibility of scripture as a source of proof, we find that, in practice, the authority of scripture is held sacrosanct. This

fact, we might suppose, is invariant from one tradition to the next because of some very basic quality of religious texts and of religious people.

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SECTION II
LANGUAGE AND PHILOSOPHY

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Chapter 6
The Validation of Language and Thought

Even if there be a hundred or a thousand monks practicing insight meditation, if there is no learning, none will realize the Noble Path.
From a Pali Commentary 1

Scholasticism is rationalist in tone and, as we have seen, committed to the elucidation of doctrines and ideas in the medium of language. Reason is of course conceptual in nature, a function of the intellect. But what does it mean to know conceptually and abstractly? And what is the relationship between conceptual thought and sense perception? Questions like these, and their answers, are the concern of scholastic epistemologies. In medieval Europe, Jewish, Christian, and Muslim scholars alike devoted considerable energy to developing theories of the workings of the intellect. They expounded and reworked Aristotelian categoriesthe active and passive intellects, and the idea of "divine illumination"in an attempt to explain how abstract, conceptual understanding functions.2 Though not encumbered by Aristotelian presuppositions, dGe lugs pa epistemology has its own Aristotle to grapple with in figure of the Indian logician Dharmakirti*. In Tibet the challenge became one of incorporating Pramanika* theories on the workings of sense perception

and conceptual thought into the larger scholastic synthesis that included prominently the Madhyamaka theory of emptiness.

The Indo-Tibetan scholastic tradition is a philosophical movement that is part of the Buddhist tradition as a whole. As such, it could never divorce itself from the tradition's more overtly religious goal, the transformation of the human person through the accumulation of virtue and the experience of insight. This tension between experience and reason, between direct perception and conceptual thought, is implicit in a great deal of the scholastic literature. That personal transformation was effectuated through religious experience born from contemplative practice was clear. What role, however, was the intellect to play in personal transformation? It is primarily in answer to this question that Buddhist scholastics develop a theory of the workings of language and conceptual thought and the role they are to play in the task of achieving liberation. In the present chapter we shall explore some of the ways in which the scholastics validate language and conceptual thought as soteriologically essential modes of knowledge. This legitimation of conceptuality is achieved, first of all, by demonstrating that it is the essential complement of sense experience. At the same time, conceptual thought and its mirror image, language, are related causally to experience in a unique way. Born from ordinary sense experience, conceptual thought in turn has the ability to act, through the mechanism of exclusion, as the cause of direct spiritual insight or yogic direct perception. Hence, through their causal and complementary relationship to experience, language and conceptual thought are legitimated and shown to be essential elements in the Buddhist path.

As with many of the philosophical movements in Buddhism, the Pramanika * tradition, the school of Buddhist epistemology that formed the basis for our discussion of scriptural authority in the last chapter, arose slowly over time in part as a response to similar developments in other schools of Indian thought. As the name implies, the enterprise was to identify and explore the nature of valid knowledge (pramna*, *tshad ma*), those forms of consciousness that could be considered incontrovertible knowledge. From the very beginning of such specula-

tion two such cognitions, as we have seen, were identified as the sole forms of valid knowledge: sense perception (pratyaksa *, *mngon sum*) and inference (anumana*, *rjes dpag*). Although other non-Buddhist schools considered other types of consciousnesses to be valid cognitions, the Buddhists, beginning with Dignaga* (sixth century),3 claimed that all other true forms of incontrovertible knowledge could be subsumed within these two.4

The Madhyamaka school saw as part of its task the careful scrutiny and critique of all phenomena, including, of course, philosophical ones like the notion of valid knowledge. This led many an interpreter of Madhyamaka thought to conclude, from very early times, that the Madhyamaka was incompatible with the tenets of the Pramanikas*. Due to certain passages in the Mahayana* sutras* and in the writings of Nagarjuna*5 and his followers, many interpreters of the Madhyamaka, both in India and Tibet, were of the opinion that Nagarjuna* had effectively shown the inconsistencies inherent in the notion of "valid knowledge" and therefore that it was incorrect for a Madhyamika* to accept the idea of pramanas*.6

The claim that the Madhyamaka repudiates the notion of valid knowledge has a number of diverse expressions. In some cases it is expressed as the claim that the Madhyamaka refutes all forms of valid knowledge without qualification. Other scholars (both traditional and contemporary) have maintained that only inference is repudiated. As we shall see in the next chapter, there were apparently Tibetan exegetes who interpreted a controversy concerning the nature of logical proof that arose in the writings of Buddhapalita* (c. 500 C.E.), Bhavaviveka* (500-570 C.E.) and Candrakirti* (600-650 C.E.)a controversy concerning the tenability of what was known as the *svatantra* form of reasoning7as implying the repudiation of inference as a valid form of knowledge. They interpreted Candrakirti's* critique of the *svatantra* form of reasoning as a critique of syllogistic reasoning *in general* and therefore as an implicit critique of the Pramanika* notion of inference, the knowledge born in dependence upon such syllogistic reasoning.

Though a point of controversy in the eyes of their opponents, the dGe lugs pas themselves consider their synthesis of

the Pramanika * and Madhyamaka schools to be one of their most outstanding triumphs.8 It is not surprising, therefore, that both Tsong kha pa, and mKhas grub rje after him, repudiate both the more radical claim that to be a Madhyamika* is to reject the notion of pramana*, and the weaker claim that Madhyamikas* reject the notion of inference born from syllogistic reasoning. For the dGe lugs pas, both forms of valid knowledge, but especially inference, play a crucial role in the process of liberation. Emptiness, the central tenet of the Madhyamaka, is said to be a slightly obtuse point (*cung zad lkog gyur kyi gnad*), as we saw in Chapter Five. This implies that the first understanding of emptiness *must be* an inferential one. True, this conceptual mode of understanding must eventually be transcended in the direct experience that is the result of meditation, but such a form of yogic direct perception can never occur without an initial inferential understanding.

Inference, therefore, is considered crucial to the process of liberation. Unlike sense perception, inference is conceptual in nature, intimately related to language and mediated through images (pratibha*, *snang ba*).9 Any study that would explore the workings of Indo-Tibetan scholasticism, and of the dGe lugs pa school in particular, cannot overlook the importance of language, conceptual thought, and inferential reasoning. In the present chapter, then, we examine the nature and workings of language and conceptual thought as presented in the Pramanavarttika* of Dharmakirti*, the primary source work in Pramanika* studies for the dGe lugs pas, and indeed for most of the Tibetan tradition. The subject, needless to say, is a vast one. Given that it has been discussed in some detail in other works,10 we limit our presentation here to those points directly relevant to the understanding and contextualization of the dGe lugs pa synthesis.

Especially important in the understanding of language and conceptual thought in the works of Dharmakirti* is the anyapoha* (*gzhan sel*) section of the Pramanavarttika*, a subsec-tion of the chapter entitled "Inference for One's Own Sake" (svarthanumana*, *rang don rjes su dpag pa*). Because both language and conceptual thought are said to "engage their ob-

jects in a negative way," as opposed to sense perception, in which objects present themselves directly in a positive fashion, it is not surprising that the most extensive discussion of these topics should occur within the section on "the negation of what is other" (anyapoha *, *gzhan sel*).

Throughout the discussion that is to follow, one would do well to keep two things in mind. First of all, for the dGe lugs pas one of the greatest challenges involved in interpreting Dharmakirti* has to do with validating inference as a source of knowledge while at the same time distinguishing it from sense perception. Although attempting to show the validity of both, that is, establishing both sense consciousness and inference qua conceptual thought as forms of valid knowledge, as pramanas*, the Pramanika* enterprise (as seen through dGe lugs pa eyes) is to find the proper criteria and tools for distinguishing philosophically what experientially we understand to be two very different ways of knowing things. To this end they create an elaborate apparatus based on the distinction between ascertainment (niscaya*, *nges pa*) and appearance (avabhasa*, *snang ba*)a distinction that is taken up over and over again both by later Indian Madhyamikas* and in various Tibetan syntheses. The importance of this doctrine to the later scholastic tradition cannot be overestimated.

Second, we must remember that Dignaga and Dharmakirti's* treatment of language (sabda*, *sgra*)11 is at the same time a treatment of conceptual thought (kalpana*, *rtog pa*), for language and conceptualization are two sides of the same coinmirror images, as it were. Whatever statements can be formulated of conceptual thought can be isomorphically translated into statements about language and vice versa. One-to-one equivalents exist between "word" and "conceptual thought," between a "word's meaning" (*artha, brjod bya/don*) and the "appearing object" of that conceptual thought (*rtog pa'i snang yul*), and between the process of direct expression in language (*sgras dngos su brjod pa*) and the process of appearance to conceptual thought (*rtog pa la snang ba*). This will become more clear as we proceed. For the moment, suffice it to point out the mere fact of the equivalence of language and conceptual thought.

I. An Epistemological and Linguistic Problem with a Solution in Ontology

The Problem

As with much of Dharmakirti's * work, the discussion of the present topic begins as a debate between the Pramanika* and an opponent, here a Naiyayika*. After his treatment of the relation (*sambandha, 'brel ba*) between reason *(hetu, gtan tshigs)* and predicate *(dharma, chos)* in the case of "causal syllogistic reasoning" (karyahetu*, *'bras bu'i gtan tshigs)* Dharmakirti* states that even in the case of "essential syllogistic reasoning" (svabhavahetu*, *rang bzhin gyi gtan tshigs)* a relation must exist. In the latter case, however, the relation is not that of an effect to its cause, as it is in the former case. Instead, the mere ontological identity of the two entities, reason and predicate, constitutes the relationship. For example in the syllogism,

Subject: sound
Predicate: is impermanent
Reason: because it is produced

production and *impermanence* are synonyms. They refer to ontologically identical entities, though named differently. They are of the same nature (*ekadravya, rdzas gcig*), and the elimination or absence of one implies the elimination or absence of the other. Hence, Dharmakirti* states: "Essential reasons also have a necessary (avinabhava*, *med mi 'byung*), but strictly ontological, relationship [between reason and predicate]. If [the former] does not exist, neither could [the latter] exist, for they are not different in nature."12

It is a well-known Pramanika* tenet that, for a syllogism to be valid, it must have three properties (trairupya*, *tshul gsum*). One of these is that the individual(s) to whom the reasoning is posited be inquisitive about the proposition being placed before them. If they are notif, for example, they have already understood the propositionthe syllogism becomes pointless, and therefore invalid.

The Naiyayika's * objection can now be formulated as follows. If the reason and predicate are related in an essential reason as Dharmakirti* says they are, in other words, if they are ontologically identical entities, then, claims the Naiyayika*, it would be impossible for there ever to exist inquisitiveness in regard to the syllogism. According to this opponent, unless the reason and predicate are of different natures, upon hearing and understanding that "sound is produced" (the reason), the individuals to whom the reasoning is posited would automatically understand that "sound is impermanent" (the predicate), implying that they would have no inquisitiveness, making the syllogism pointless.

Put in linguistic terms, the. opponent is claiming that two words that refer to the same entity (or expressed ontologically, two entities that are of the same nature) must mutually express each other such that, upon hearing the name of one, the other should be immediately understood.

We see here the interpenetration of the realms of logic, ontology, epistemology, and language in a way that is quite common in Pramanika* thought. Though the initial question arises in the context of the analysis of the logical structure of a syllogism and the ontological relation of its component parts, it is answered by Dharmakirti* in a way that brings ontology, epistemology, and the theory of language all into mutual play.

I.B. On the Workings of Sense Perception and Conceptual Thought

I.B.1. Two Kinds of Objects

Before turning to the solution of the conundrum suggested by the Naiyayika*, it is necessary to briefly examine the Pramanika* theory of the nature of perception and conceptual thought. To do so at this point will aid in understanding Dharmakirti's* reply to the Naiyayikas'* objection.

Pramanika* philosophy is, more than anything else, epistemology. One of the chief questions for dGe lugs pa exegetes of this tradition concerns the differences between direct sense perception and linguistic or conceptual thought. As mentioned already, they attempt to explain how two vastly different forms

of knowledge can both be valid knowledge, and to this end they create a distinction between ascertainment and appearance. 13

In general, any thought, whether a sense perception or a conceptual thought, is said to have two kinds of objects, apprehended objects (*'dzin stang gi yul*), or ascertained objects (*nges yul*), and appearing objects (*snang yul*) The former is the chief or main object of a particular cognition, and it is unique to any one cognitive state. In general, the apprehended object is the principal object that is ascertained or understood by a consciousness. For example, the eye consciousness apprehending a pot and the conceptual thought that thinks "pot" both have the pot, and the pot alone, as their apprehended object. These two cognitions, however, differ as regards their appearing objects. In the case of sense perception, the apprehended object and the appearing object are identical (the pot in each case). In conceptual thought they are not. What is more, in sense perception not only does the pot itself appear, all of those qualities that are cotemporal, cospatial and coessential with the pot (the pot's impermanence, for example) also appear en masse, without differentiation, to the sense perception, that is, to the eye consciousness perceiving the pot. The appearing objects of conceptual thought, however, are very limited. In the present example, only the appearance of the pot (its generic image, or *don spyi*), or viewed linguistically, the meaning of the word *pot*, is the appearing object of the conceptual thought apprehending a pot. Let us examine this in more detail.

I.B.2. Error and Mistake

We need, first of all, to define two additional terms. One is *error* (bhranta*, *'khrul* pa) and the other, *mistake* (mithya*, *log pa*) Error is related to *appearance*. A consciousness is erroneous when what appears to it does not exist as it appears. Being mistaken is something related to *ascertainment*, that is, to the principal object perceived or apprehended by the consciousness. Hence, a cognition is said to be mistaken when its principal or apprehended object does not exist. A few examples should clarify the uses of these two terms.

The eye consciousness perceiving the words on this page (the actual physical form of the words, not their meaning) is nonmistaken. Its principal object, the words, exist. For the Pramanikas * it is also nonerroneous, because, being a form of sense perception, things exist as they appear to the eye consciousness. One could also say that it is nonerroneous because everything that appears to the eye consciousness perceiving these words, all of the coessential properties of the words, like their impermanence, their form, and so forth, actually exist exactly as they appear to the eye consciousnessmore on this later. Hence, the eye consciousness is an example of something that is neither mistaken nor erroneous.

The perception of water in a mirage and the conceptual thought that entertains the possibility of that water's existence, or of its coolness, are both mistaken because their principal objects (the water and its coolness) do not exist. The conceptual thought that is the memory of this page, or put in another way, the conceptual thought that is evoked by the words *this page*, on the other hand, though not mistaken (because the page exists) is erroneous because it confuses its appearing object, the image of this page or the meaning of the words *this page* with the actual page. Hence, all conceptual thought, whether memory or whether evoked by language, is erroneous. Now we can begin to put the pieces of the puzzle together to get an idea of the Pramanikas'* notion of the workings of sense perception and conceptual thought.

I.B.3. The Workings of Sense Perception

To explain the nonerroneous nature of sense perception and to distinguish it from conceptual-linguistic thought, the Pramanikas* claim that the eye consciousness apprehending a pot has the actual pot qua real entity as its appearing object, and they maintain that all of the qualities of the pot appear to such an eye consciousness simultaneously and without differentiation. "The two substances, sound itself and the impermanence of sound, cannot appear to direct sense perception as different; nor do they appear to different sense perceptions one at a time."14 All

of these qualities or aspects of the substance (*rdzas cha*) appear to the eye consciousness in a positive way under the object's own power. 15 By *qualities* we mean all of those aspects that are cotemporal, cospatial (where applicable), and coessential with the pot. Hence, when the eye consciousness apprehends the pot, at that same moment the impermanence of the pot, its form, its being a product, and innumerable other such qualities appear. For this reason sense perception is said to enter into its object in a positive way (*sgrub 'jug*), without differentiation as to which coessential qualities appear and which do not. Also for this reason it is said to "enter or understand its object via the power of appearance" (*snang ba'i sgo nas 'jug*), because, apart from the en masse appearance of all of these qualities, there is nothing that can be identified as the apprehension of an object by sense perception. It is because the object presents itself in this undifferentiated way to sense perception, and because all of the aspects are actual qualities of the object, that sense perception is considered to be nonerroneous.

In this regard a question arises concerning whether sense perception can be said to "ascertain" its object at all. It seems to me that a case can be made for the fact that in the Indian Pramanika* literature "ascertainment" is considered to be something that only conceptual thought can do; the eye consciousness that sees a pot "apprehends" it, "sees" it, but does not ascertain it. This is contrary to the mainline dGe lugs pa interpretation, however. Their argument for why the Pramanikas* consider ascertainment to be the exclusive property of conceptual thought will be outlined in the following text.

I.B.4. The Workings of Language and Conceptual Thought

The appearing objects of conceptual thought, as we have seen, are quite limited, for conceptual thought, and therefore language, engages its object in a negative way (*sel 'jug*); that is, by eliminating all objects other than the one under consideration (*rang ma yin pa'i sal ba'i sgo nas 'jug*). The conceptual thought apprehending a pot, and likewise the word *pot*, evoke their appearing object-meaning, "the appearance of the pot," by eliminating all entities that are not the pot, including the vast majority of coessential qualities. This is what is meant by saying that con-

ceptual thought and language engage their objects in a negative way, that is, via the mechanism of *apoha*. They are also said to enter into their objects via the power of ascertainment (*nges pa'i sgo nas 'jug*).

mKhas grub rje distinguishes between actual, direct objects (the ascertained objects) and appearing objects of a conceptual thought in the following way:

> In our own system, in all [forms of perception that] invoke [their] objects in a positive way, as do the nonerroneous forms of sense perception, there is no difference between the object that is actually perceived and the appearing object. There is no division of actual objects into those that are and those that are not appearing objects, [since all apprehended objects must be appearing objects]. This, however, is not so in the case of [cognitions that] invoke their objects in a negative way. Why? In the case of the conceptual thought that ascertains the pot, for example, the pot that is ascertained in such a thought is directly apprehended (*dngos su gzung ba*) [that is, it appears] but is not an appearing object, while the meaning of the word *pot*, for example, *is* an appearing object but is not ascertained. 16

From this passage we glean two important facts in mKhas grub rje's interpretation. First of all, the appearing object of sense perception is the same as the object ascertained by that sense perception. Though other coessential qualifies of the object also appear, they are not considered to be "appearing objects." Second, the appearing object of conceptual thought is not a real entityit is not the potbut instead is "the meaning of the word," an entity only imputed by conceptual thought. What is more, although this object appears, it is not ascertained. The real entity, however, *is* ascertained and does actually appear, but is not considered to be an "appearing object." The latter can be only the "appearance" (*snang ba*) of the pot (the genetic image, the meaning of the word *pot*) and not the pot itself.

I.B.5. Polemics

As mentioned previously, in my reading of the Pramanika* texts I have taken the claim that conceptual thought "engages its object via ascertainment" to mean that conceptual-linguistic

thoughts come to an understanding of their objects by ascertaining them. This is in contradistinction to sense perception, which apprehends its objects simply through the en masse appearance of all of its qualities. It seems to me that the Pramanikas * have very consciously made a distinction between quantity, which is certainly present in sense perception, and quality, which is implied by the word *ascertainment.* Conceptual thought may not understand very much, because not all that much appears to it, but what it does understand it understands well, because it ascertains it. To claim, as the dGe lugs pa exegetes do,17 that sense perception ascertains its object is to belittle to the point of meaninglessness the distinction between the fact that sense perception is a form of cognition that engages its object via appearances and that conceptual thought does so by means of ascertainment. Why should the Indian texts have gone through the trouble of claiming that conceptual thought engages its object via ascertainment if sense perception also ascertains its object? Why set "engagement via appearance" in opposition to "engagement via ascertainment" if sense perception, which engages its object via appearances, also ascertains its object?

There is another troubling point in the dGe lugs pa theory of the workings of perception and conceptual thought, though in this case the stance that the dGe lugs pas take has strong roots even in the Indian tradition. One gets the impression at times that the Pramanikas* would actually prefer to simply claim that conceptual thought and language do not have real objects at all, *even as their ascertained or principal objects.*18 The simplicity of this interpretation is enticing. It would mean that sense perception engages real objects in a positive way but that, because it operates strictly via appearances, it cannot ascertain its object. Conceptual thought would then ascertain its object. The object, however, is not a real entity, for conceptual thought comes to understand its object in a negative way through the process of exclusion of what is other. The interpretation is appealing because of its simplicity.

The dGe lugs pas, following Ratnakirti* among others,19 maintain that there are simply too many negative consequences to such an interpretation. It would imply, for example, that in-

ference (anumana *, *rjes dpag*) could never ascertain real objects and that it would always be mistaken as to its actual principal object (believing it to be real when it in fact was not). This of course would make it not only an erroneous cognition (which is agreed to by all parties) but a mistaken one as well (something anathema to the dGe lugs pa synthesis). If inference were mistaken as a cognition, it could not be a form of valid knowledge. This of course would utterly undermine the Pramanika* goal, which is to preserve the validity of both sense perception *and* inference while adequately distinguishing between them.

I.B.5. A Synopsis

Lest the reader be on the verge of drowning in this mire of polemics, let me recapitulate the dGe lugs pa stance as a summary of this section, bearing in mind that it is one reading of the Buddhist Pramanika* literature and that it gives up some simplicity for the sake of consistency. Objects are of two kinds: ascertained or apprehended objects and appearing objects. In the case of the sense perception that sees a pot, the ascertained and appearing objects are identical. The real pot is both. The pot presents itself in all its starkness to the sense perception that apprehends it. Hence, the latter perceives it vividly, directly, and in a positive way. According to the dGe lugs pas, it can also be said to ascertain the pot, and because all of the qualities of the pot present themselves (that is, appear) together at the moment of perception, sense consciousness is said to be a form of cognition that engages or invokes its object via appearances. The qualities, though appearing, are not appearing objects.

In the case of conceptual thought, on the other hand, a distinction is made between ascertained and appearing objects. The ascertained object of the conceptual thought that apprehends a pot is the real pot itself. The real pot, however, does not present itself to the conceptual thought directly. It is instead mediated through a generic image or through the meaning of the word *pot.* The latter (the generic image or meaning of the word) is the appearing object, and it is not a real entity but a permanent universal (samanya*, *spyi*). Hence, in the case of conceptual thought, the ascertained object is different from the

appearing object, and because the two are confused, conceptual thought, including inference, is considered to be erroneous. 20 The fact that conceptual thought is erroneous, however, does not imply that it is mistaken, for despite the error it can ascertain its principal object correctly. The pot is ascertained and appears, but it is not the appearing object; it is only the ascertained object. The generic image of the pot appears and is not ascertained. It is only the appearing object. As in the case of sense perception, many other entities appear to conceptual thought. This does not make them appearing objects. It is only the appearance of the pot, the generic image or, once again, the meaning of the word *pot*, that is the appearing object. Unlike sense perception, however, the myriad coessential qualities of the pot do not appear to conceptual thought. Instead, because language and conceptual thought work through the elimination of what is other than the ascertained object itself, they are said to engage or invoke their object in a negative way. For this very reason, that is, because conceptual thought is selective and works through exclusion, it manages to ascertain its object in a special way. This is what makes it an ideal weapon in the fight against reification, the innate tendency of the mind to impute to objects qualities that they do not have. The ascertaining function of conceptual thought, and inference in particular, gives this form of knowledge the ability to counteract reification. This, then, is a synopsis of the dGe lugs pa view.

I.B.6. The Complementary Nature of Sense Perception and Conceptual Thought

It is essential to realize that in the Pramanika* system what appears is not necessarily understood. For example, though every coessential quality of the pot appears to the eye consciousness that sees the pot, that eye consciousness understands very few of them. It does not, for example, understand the impermanence of the pot. Because the mind tends to impute another attribute to the pot, namely, permanence (a form of reification), and because sense perception is limited in its ability to counteract this reification, another form of knowledge, of a conceptual-linguistic variety, must be posited as a complement to sense

perception. Of course, of all conceptual forms of cognition, inference is considered the actual counterpart to sense perception. rGyal tshab Dar marin chen states in his *Thar lam gsal byed:*

> The direct perception that apprehends sound, for example, perceives all of the coessential qualities of sound, because it sees the real entity (*dngos po*), sound, taking it as its grasped object (*gzung don*). Still, although it sees it in this way, there is still a need for engaging in the proof of the impermanence of sound because, due to external and internal error, it [sense perception] does not *ascertain* things as it sees them.

On the one hand, sense direct perception is extolled as the nonerroneous consciousness par excellence, to which all of the coessential properties of its object appear. On the other hand, sense perception is not considered powerful enough, as it were, to combat the reificatory tendencies of the mind, here called *external and internal error*. 20 In short, sense perception simply cannot *understand* all that *appears* to it.

The reificatory errors can be combatted, not by a mind that passively accepts all of the qualities the object presents to it (as sense perception does), but by a form of knowledge that distinguishes between these qualities and brings to sharp focus one particular property, such as impermanence. This inference does through the process of eliminating everything that is other than the one quality under scrutiny. In short, reification can be eliminated only by a form of knowledge that works through negation, and this implies that it must be conceptual-linguistic in nature. However, although language and inference can accomplish this, they are limited, due to their selective nature; that is, due to the fact that they actually understand only the little that appears to them after all else has been eliminated.

The complementarity of inference and sense perception might very well be compared to the scenario of a blind old scholar being led by a small, inexperienced child. The scholar understands the implications of a given situation through her critical abilities and discrimination but does not see the details around her, and therefore depends on the child for guidance. The child, on the other hand, has the advantage of vast amounts

of sensory data, but does not have the critical faculties to fully appreciate or assess them.

I.C. The Solution

After this brief excursion into the epistemology of the Pramanikas *, we return to our original scenario and we present the Buddhist reply to the Nyaya* critique.

Every real particular entity (svalaksana*, *rang mtshan*), says Dharmakirti*, is unique unto itself, abiding in its own nature without mixing, either spatially, temporally, or essentially with anything else. Because of this each such entity can be said to be the opposite of all other entities, both concordant (sajatiya*, *rigs mthun*) and discordant (vijatiya*, *rigs mi mthun*) to it. For example, a particular flower is the opposite (nivrtti*, *Idog pa*) of all other flowers (the concordant entities) and of all other phenomena such as permanence (the discordant entities). In this way, the flower can be said to abide essentially in its own nature; and because of this ontological property of real entities, different qualities can be predicated of them. mKhas grub rje states, in his commentary to this portion of the Pramanavarttika*:

> Having explained that all real entities (*dngos po*) abide without mixing with others, it [PV]... shows that they can be divided into many qualities qua opposites (*ldog pa*). Taking as its reason the fact that sound abides without mixing with permanence, [the text] states that [it is fitting and not redundant] to predicate the word *impermanent* of sound; and, taking as its reason the fact that sound abides without mixing with nonproduction, it says that [it is fitting and not redundant] to predicate the word *product* of sound. It is because of this that production and impermanence can be said to be different qualities qua opposites. It is by means of eliminating permanence with regard to sound that, when the word *impermanent* is predicated of it, the uniqueness of impermanence is actually understood, while the uniqueness of production is not [and vice versa with production].... [By predicating one quality of sound, no other quality can be understood] and it is for this reason that all

language and conceptual thought is said to come to an understanding of its object in a negative way. 21

This one passage tells us a great deal about the nature of language and conceptual thought in the Pramanika* system and about the ontological basis of the theory. It explains, first of all, the specificity of language (that by one word we directly understand one thing and not all of the things denoted by synonyms of the word), as well as the possibility of predication. What is perhaps most interesting, however, is that it explains that both of these properties of words (specificity and predication) emerge as corollaries of the ontological nature of real entites. The individual and absolutely discreet nature of real entities allows for the specificity of language, and as we shall see, the fact of the specificity of language for the Pramanikas* serves as evidence for the fact that language and conceptual thought operate in a negative way.22

Because it is not completely evident how, in the process of presenting this theory, Dharmakirti* has answered the objection of the Naiyayika* let me briefly explain. If language is specific, and the predication of a quality expresses only the specific quality being predicated and no others, then recalling the syllogism in question, the fact that *production* and *impermanence* are mutually coextensive categories, synonyms as words, and of the same nature ontologically does not vitiate against the fact that the words *sound is produced* do not directly express that *sound is impermanent.* Hence, it is possible for someone to understand conceptually that sound is produced and still doubt its impermanence, despite the fact that *impermanence* and *production* are synonyms. As mKhas grub rje says, "not only does [Dharmakirti*] show that those words have different meaning-referents (*yul*), he also shows that they have different functions (*dgos pa*)."23

In this way, Dignaga* and Dharmakirti*, in the process of defending the validity of inferential reasoning, posit the theory of *apoha* as a general framework for the functioning of all language and conceptual thought and as a means for distinguishing these forms of knowledge from the direct perception of the

senses. We can see how the theory of language proposed by Dharmakirti * arises in the context of both ontological and epistemological considerations. In the context of the PV it arises as a natural by-product of the validity of inferential reasoning, and hence as a by-product of the attempt to distinguish sense perception from conceptual thought. Yet Dharmakirti* makes it clear that at the very core of his *apoha* theory of language there exist ontological presuppositions, namely the radical realism of the svalaksana* theory. We shall see later that the exaltation of sense perception (as the non-erroneous consciousness par excellence) and the claim that its objects (real entities) are ultimate entities (paramartha*, *don dam pa*) will implicitly demean the status of language and conceptual thought and *their* appearing objects (conceptually labeled entities-*parikalpita*, *kun brtags*) to the level of mere conventional entities (samvrtti*, *kun rdzob*). This hierarchical arrangement that places language, its referents, and the understanding born from it in a position inferior to sense perception and *its* objects is also a by-product of ontological presuppositions.

Throughout the history of Buddhist scholasticism we see this pattern repeated again and again. The attitudes toward, and theories of, language are never isolated speculation but are always intimately connected to questions of knowledge and being. Though true in general, the interconnection of these fields in Dharmakirti's* Pramanavarttika* is especially clear. The effect that this is to have on later Tibetan Madhyamaka exegesis in general (and on that of the dGe lugs pa school in particular) cannot be overestimated. Already in the Tibetan commentaries to the Pramanavarttika* we find the implications of the Pramanikas'* epistemological theories to the Madhyamaka brought up explicitly, over and again.24

II. Specificity and the "Apohic" Nature of Language

II.A. Specificity as the Reason Behind Apoha

In his autocommentary to the first chapter of the Pramanavarttika*, Dharmakirti* asks the following question: "How

is one to know that language and inferential reasoning come to an understanding [of their objects-referents] in a negative way, and not strictly by virtue of an entity's own being, in a positive way?" His answer is this: "It is because other forms of valid knowledge and other words must be invoked." 25 This reason, more than any other, is the impetus behind Dharmakirti's* *apoha* theory. It is a statement of the specificity of language and conceptual thought. The idea is that each word (or combination of words) is unique and specific in its function. It can bring a direct understanding *exactly* of what the words express and nothing else. For example, to *understand conceptually* that sound is impermanent it is not sufficient to *understand conceptually* that sound is produced. To *actually express* that sound is impermanent it is not sufficient to *say* that sound is produced or to simply say the word *sound.*

Both language and conceptual thought work to actually express-understand only their specific and unique objects. This fact is, for Dharmakirti*, axiomatic, that is, self-evident. According to mKhas grub rje, it is something accepted even by the Naiyayikas*, because it is something intuitively obvious to any-one.26 The fact that it is necessary to invoke reasoning (the "other form of valid knowledge" in the previous citation) other than that which establishes the subject, and words other than those that name the subject, in order to predicate specific qualities of that subject is, for the Pramanikas*, both self-evident and, more important, an indication of the fact that language and conceptual thought invoke their objects in a negative way, that is, by the exclusion of what they are not.

II.B. Buddhist/Nyaya Polemics*

The Naiyayikas'* claim that language and conceptual thought come to understand their objects in a *positive* way is, of course, in sharp contrast to the Buddhist theory. We present, in what follows, the polemics between the Buddhists and Naiyayikas* concerning the workings of language and conceptual thought. Note how, throughout the argument, the fact of the specificity of language is at the very core of the Buddhist response.

Dharmakirti * states, in PV: "When the very own nature of an object is completely established by direct perception, how could there be other unseen aspects left to be analyzed by [other] valid forms of knowledge? "27 If, as the Naiyayikas* claim, inferential reasoning, language, and conceptual thought in general engage their objects in a positive way, as direct perception does, then, asks Dharmakirti*, do other valid forms of knowledge, like inference, show us an aspect of the object that is unseen by28 (that does not appear to) direct perception or do they operate as vehicles that ascertain what has not been previously ascertained?

Let us consider the first possibility, that in direct perception no aspects or qualities of the object are left un-seenleft, as it were, undiscovered. Were that so, it would be pointless to invoke other forms of valid knowledge, such as inference, to "see unseen qualities" because direct perception, by its very nature, manages "to see" all the qualities of the object.

mKhas grub rje29 glosses this PV verse (and the two that follow) as criticisms of the Naiyayika* position. If, as the Naiyayikas* claim, language and conceptual thought operate in a positive way, and not via *apoha*, then "to invoke other valid forms of knowledge and other words for the purpose of seeing what is not seen would be meaningless or purposeless." To put it in linguistic terms, he is saying that it would become meaningless to predicate any quality of any object for the purpose of "seeing" that quality, for the quality would already have been seen by the direct perception apprehending the object.

Now, as for the second possibility, Dharmakirti* states:

> Likewise with inference, if it apprehends a real object [as you, the Naiyayika*, claim,] then as soon as it ascertained one quality [of that entity] it would have to apprehend all of its qualities; but the [theory of the advocate of] *apoha* suffers not from this absurdity.30

Likewise an absurdity follows if it is the purpose of other forms of valid knowledge, like inference, to ascertain what was left unascertained by direct perception. Because it is the opponents' position that inference (which is a form of conceptual thought) does not engage its object in a negative (apohic) way, but in a positive way, as does direct perception, by apprehending one

quality of an object it would have to apprehend *all* of the object's qualities, as is the case with sense perception.

Now the Naiyayika * quite rightfully objects that there is no harm in claiming that conceptual-linguistic thoughts apprehend all of the qualities of the object (that all of the qualities of the object appear to them) without ascertaining them all. After all, do not the Pramanikas* themselves claim this to be true of sense perception? Consider this passage from Dharmakirti's* auto-commentary to this verse:

> (If you claim that) forms of ascertainment (i.e., conceptual-linguistic thoughts) ascertain only the object which they understand while all of the other qualities of the object (though they appear) are not ascertained, then how (can you say that) it apprehends (all of those qualities that it does not understand)?
>
> [Opponent:] It apprehends (all the qualities) while not ascertaining them, just as (in your own system) direct perception does.
>
> [Reply:] (But in our system) direct perception does not ascertain *anything*. What it grasps it does not ascertain. Why? Because (it invokes its object only) by means of appearance. Hence, whether or not something is grasped by direct perception is not determined by whether or not it is ascertained. Ascertainment (that is, conceptual-linguistic thought, on the other hand) does not operate in this way. It is said to grasp some distinctions and not others because it invokes its object by ascertainment of only some of its qualities and not others. Hence, whatever *it* ascertains it also grasps.31

Hence, the fault raised against the Naiyayika* stands. If conceptual thoughts such as inference were to operate in a positive way then all of the coessential qualities of an object x must be ascertained by them, making the predication of such qualities by words other than *x* purposeless.

For Dharmakirti* the apohic character of the workings of language and conceptual thought imparts to them specificity. Because they operate through the exclusion of what is other than the objectbecause they operate in a negative wayone word-thought expresses-understands one unique object. He says:

"Were it otherwise, that is, if one single word or thought *could* encompass (within it all of the qualities) of a single entity, then (speech and conceptual thought) would not invoke their objects apohically, and as a result they would be redundant." 32 If the word *sound* and the word *impermanence* did not invoke their objects in a negative fashion, then, like sense perception, they would lose their specificity. If so, then merely hearing the word *sound* would conjure up the idea of its impermanence, making the predication *sound is impermanent* redundant. We know from experience, however, that this is not the case, that predicating the quality *"impermanence"* of sound is not redundant.

III. Inference as the Force Counteracting Reification

What exactly does it mean to say that language and conceptual thought work in a negative way? Why is it that the linguistic and conceptual understanding of specific objects, invoked in a negative way, *ascertain* their objects, whereas sense perception, working in a positive way, through the en masse appearance of all the coessential qualifies, cannot give rise to such ascertainment? The answers to these questions all revolve around the theory of reification (samaropa*, *sgro ldog*) and it is to this that we now turn.

If nothing were present to inhibit the ascertainment of all of the qualities that appear to direct perception, then those qualifies would all be ascertained. Immediately after perceiving sound, for example, one would understand its impermanence, its being a produced thing, and so forth. In fact, however, there are inhibiting psychological factors that *do* stand in the way of the arising of such understanding; namely reification, a form of mental error.33

Consider this example. We see from afar a shining object (in actuality mother of pearl) that, because of its shininess (a quality also shared by silver) we take *to be* silver. It is an error of thought, a mistake that we make, taking something that is not silver to be silver. This is reification. Likewise, a pot that is in actuality impermanent, changing from moment to moment, is not perceived to be impermanent, and is instead perceived as

static and unchanging. This is due to two kinds of causes, internal and external. The internal causes are the mental latencies that human beings possess, innate psychological blocks that make the error possible. The external cause is the fact that the second moment of the pot resembles the first. These two factors together give rise to our perceiving the pot as if it were permanent. Were such reification not present, then the direct sense perception of the pot should give rise to the subsequent ascertainment of the quality of impermanence, but because this form of reification *does* exists, direct perception is inhibited from giving rise to an understanding of the impermanence of the pot. 34 What is more, to counteract the reification, speech and conceptual thought (valid forms of knowledge that work apohically) must be employed to come to an understanding of the fact that the object of the reification, the permanence of the pot, for example, does not exist. It is this, namely the understanding that the pot is impermanent, and only this that, because of its specificity in opposing the exact object of the reification, can destroy the reification: "Ascertainment and reification are mutually antithetical to each other. [Ascertainment] should be known as the understanding that the reification is devoid [of any reality]."35

Why then does inference, and we might add language and conceptual thought in general, come to an understanding of its object in a negative way? It is because, for as long as it is active, for as long as its imprint upon the mind has not deteriorated, its antithetical reifications cannot operate. That is to say that it has "ascertained the elimination [the nonexistence] of the object that is opposite to its own object."36 Hence, the inference that understands impermanence, for example, operates negatively because it negates the opposite of its own ascertained object. By negating permanence it effectively blocks the actual arising of the reificatory thought that apprehends that sound is permanent.37 What is more, because the ascertainment of *x* actually eliminates not-*x* and nothing else, each word and each conceptual thought is specific in blocking only one reificatory thought, making it necessary, and not redundant, to predicate and ascertain other qualities of the object in dependence upon other words

and valid forms of knowledge: "The Apohavadin * does not suffer from the fault that other valid forms of knowledge become purposeless because [for him or her] each individual valid cognition eliminates only its corresponding reification, one valid form of knowledge being unable to eliminate them all."38

IV. Conclusion

We have analyzed the individual characteristics and the mutual complementarity of sense perception and conceptual-linguistic thought. We have examined the notion of specificty and have seen the interrelation within the Pramanika* system of several ideas: the specificity of language and conceptual thought, their apohic operation, and their unique ability to counteract reification. Not only does this theory give the Pramanikas* (and the dGe lugs pas who follow them) the ability to distinguish language and conceptual thought from sense perception, more important, it provides them a means for establishing the former as equally valid, within its own sphere of operation, as the latter and for demonstrating the necessity of the former as the unique counteractive agent against reification. In this way, the validity of language and conceptual thought, the very raw materials of scholasticism, are upheld.

For the Pramanikas*, then, language and conceptual thought are as necessary as sense perception. Whereas evident objects, like tables and chairs, can be cognized directly through the senses, soteriologically important concepts, like impermanence and emptiness, require inference as the initial mode of cognition. For this reason the Pramanikas* devote time and effort to the validation of langauge. And yet, despite the fact that conceptual-linguistic understanding is the necessary beginning of the spiritual path, it is not its end. Eventually this form of knowledge must be transcended in the experience of yogic direct perceptionn (yogipratyaksa*, *rnal 'byor mngon sum*). By accustoming oneself to the conceptual understanding of imperma-nence or emptiness there is eventually born an intuitive understanding of these conceptsan understanding akin to sense

perception in its clarity and power. This is considered the true antidote to the various forms of reification. It is this direct intuitive understanding that destroys reification permanently and from the root. Hence, like scripture, language and conceptual thought too are but stepping stones, rafts, that lead to something greater than themselves; but like scripture, they are indispensable prerequisites to the spiritual path.

The dGe lugs pas, in their great synthesis of the Pramanika * and Madhyamaka schools, uphold the importance of the analytical tradition within Buddhism. For them, as for many scholastics, language and conceptual thought are indispensable tools in the process of the spiritual growth that culminates in full enlightenment.38 For the dGe lugs pas, language clearly has the ability to express the truth. Indeed, the inferential-conceptual understanding of the truth as expressed in language is considered to be the very foundation of the path.

Chapter 7
The Defense of Logic 1

Master Mo Tzu pronounces: to assert one must establish norms.
The Book of Mo tzu2

It is false to say that reasoning must either rest on first principles or on ultimate facts.
Charles Sanders Pierce3

B. B. Price calls "the passionate embrace of reason as the route to knowledge" one of the principle trademarks of medieval European scholasticism as a movement. Scholastics see reason as the means for systematizing doctrine, as the method of defending that systematization in the face of opponents' criticisms, and as the medium through which religious understanding, faith, and religious experience develop. For these reasons Buddhist scholastics, and many of their counterparts in other cultures, believed that an understanding of logic, the principles underlying philosophical argumentation (both for one's own sake and for the sake of others), was indispensable. As philosophical views proliferated, it could no longer be assumed that an interlocutor would share either one's presuppositions or one's scriptural sources. It was perhaps this, more than anything else, that made logic, as a doctrinally "neutral" science, essential as the new commonality that made philosophical discourse posssible. This trend can be witnessed in Europe in the work of Anselm of Cantebury and Peter Abelard, both of whom attempted to ar-

gue for the existence of God "on persuasion on the logic of language and ideas, without reference to the authority of scripture." 4 In China the idea that rational argumentation had to follow certain standards or "gnomons" is to be found as early as the *Mo tzu*.5 The study of logic, and especially syllogistic reasoning, was also an essential aspect of Buddhist scholastic learning, as we have seen. However, as the Buddhist scholastics of India and Tibet turned their attention self-critically to logic itself new disagreements arose concerning the very nature of the principles that formed the foundation for rational discourse. In Tibet, for example, the Sa skya scholar Go bo rab 'byams pa bSod nams seng ge (1429-1489), in a move not unlike one made by Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464),6 rejected the principle of noncontradiction, claiming that Madhyamikas* who espouse the "freedom from extreme" doctrine (Go ram pa's brand of emptiness) must go beyond ordinary logic when they cognize emptiness.7 It is interesting to note, however, that even in their rejection of the most basic principles of logic these scholastics abide by the very canons of rational discourse they reject, something that did not escape their critics.

In this chapter we focus on a different but related polemic that goes to the very heart of Indo-Tibetan Buddhist scholasticism. Beginning with the Indian scholar Bhavaviveka* a polemic arose concerning the status of syllogistic reasoning in the understanding of emptiness, the ultimate truth. Formal syllogistic reasoning is of course known in a wide variety of cultural settings from China8 and India9 to Greece10 and the Arabic-Islamic world.11 In Buddhist scholasticism a syllogism is the vehicle for generating inferential, rational knowledge. Bhavaviveka* and those who followed him would claim that the inferential understanding of emptiness required the use of a certain type of syllogism (the *svatantra*) with certain specific, formal qualities. His opponents, represented by Candrakirti* and *his* followers, had a more laissez-faire and pragmatic attitude to the logical structure of Madhyamaka reasoning, rejecting what they perceived to be the essentialism of the Svatantrikas* (the advocates of *svatantra* logic). In Tibet this rejection was perceived by some (Go ram pa among them) to represent the Madhyamaka's wholesale repu-

diation of syllogistic reasoning, at least as it applied to the analysis of the ultimate. The dGe lugs pas, committed as they were to the melding of the Madhyamaka theory of emptiness and the Pramanika * method of inferential reasoning, found such an interpretation anathema. It is this controversy that is the focus of the present chapter.

In his defense of pragmatism, an enterprise that has to a great extent been responsible for renewed interest in James and Dewey, Richard Rorty sets the essentialists' theory of philosophical argumentation against that of the pragmatist, for whom, "conversation necessarily aims at agreement and at rational consensus, that we converse in order to make further conversation unnecessary."12 In describing the antipragmatist view Rorty states:

> The anti-pragmatist believes that conversation makes sense only if something like the Platonic theory of Recollection is rightif we all have natural starting points of thought somewhere within us and will recognize the vocabulary in which they are best formulated once we hear it. For only if something like that is true will conversation have a natural goal. The Enlightenment hoped to find such a vocabularynature's own vocabulary, so to speak.... So our culture clings more than ever to the hope of the Enlightenment, the hope that drove Kant to make philosophy formal and rigorous and professional. We hope that by formulating the right conceptions of reason, of science... the conceptions which express their essence, we shall have a shield against irrationalist resentment and hatred.13

In Buddhist scholasticism too there arose considerable speculation concerning the rules and presuppositions of valid philosophical argumentation,14 and, as in the West, we can identify two different attitudes concerning the nature of philosophical discourse. On the one hand, there is an essentialist position that seeks to elaborate a complex theory of argumentation outside of which no resolution of philosophical issuesindeed, outside of which no rational knowledgeis possible. Although different in character from the Enlightenment model, it shares with it the belief that certain formal criteria must be met for philosophical

discourse to occur successfully. On the other hand, there exists a view akin to that of the pragmatists, that the function of philosophical argumentation was to convince the other party of one's own position in order to bring the conversation to an end. They held that outside of this pragmatic end there existed no essence to philosophical discourse, no inherent formal qualities by virtue of which philosophical discourse became legitimate and valid.

There is arguably no better locus for the study of this problem than in the disputes between the two rival schools of the Madhyamaka philosophy, the Svatantrikas *, the "advocates of autonomous reasoning," and the Prasangikas*, the "advocates of the reductio argument." Although the issue was, as we shall see, a complex one, put succinctly it was this. The Svatantrikas* maintained that for a philosophical argument to be valid it required that the position be stated as a syllogism with very specific formal properties. Although the Prasangikas* (at least as interpreted by the dGe lugs pas) did not wish to discard the possibility of syllogistic reasoning, they also did not wish to limit philosophical argumentation to that alone. In the end the Prasangikas* advocated the very pragmatical position that the best argument is the argument that serves to convince the opponent of one's own views.

In the process of defending the Prasangikas*, the school to which the dGe lugs pas themselves claim to subscribe, Tsong kha pa and his followers go to great lengths to show that the repudiation of an essentialistic theory of reasoning and argumentation, that is, of formal, essentialistic logic, does not leave one a skeptic. This, of course, is no surprise. Rationality, whether in its cognitive guise as inference or in its linguistic mode as philosophical discourse, is the backbone of Buddhist scholasticism. In Chapter Nine we shall see the extent to which the dGe lugs pas go to preserve the possibility of discourse in general. The present object of inquiry, however, concerns the specific function of language in the context of formal philosophical argumentation.

One of the most important and most complex topics in the Madhyamaka curriculum of the great monastic universities of Tibet dealt with the Prasangika* critique of the *svatantra* form of

reasoning, a type of syllogism that the Prasangika * school considered incompatible with the tenets of the Madhyamaka but that, as we have seen, was adhered to by another branch of that same school that eventually came to be called by the very name of such reasoning, the Svatantrikas*. For our purposes we can say that the syllogisms in question had three essential parts, a subject (to use a simpler example, let us choose the subject "on the hill"), a predicate ("there is fire"), and a reason ("because there is smoke"). Following the Indian exegesis based on Mulamadhyamakakarika* (III,2),15 the dGe lugs pa analysis focuses the discussion on the nature of the *subjects* of syllogisms and of the pramanas*, the valid forms of knowledge, that perceive them. Specifically, the argument revolved around the question of whether the subjects of the syllogisms used by Madhyamikas* appeared in the same way to the Madhyamika* proponents of the syllogisms as they did to those realists at whom the syllogisms were directed (*chos can mthun snang*). The Svatantrikas* maintained that this commonality of appearance to both proponent and opponent was an *essential* aspect of a valid syllogismin effect, that no true argument could be valid without it. The Prasangikas* took the more pragmatic position already described, namely, that such commonality was not essential to valid argumentation. Indeed the Prasangikas* often opted, though not exclusively, for a different type of argument, the reductio (*prasanga*), that attempted to convince opponents of the truth of the Madhyamaka position by demonstrating to them the absurdity of their own. For the dGe lugs pas, however, this did not mean that the Prasangikas* were eschewing formal syllogistic reasoning. Instead, the Prasangikas* reject the notion that syllogistic reasoning essentially requires the subject of the syllogism to be compatibly established, that is, that it be conceived of in the same way by both the Prasangikas*, the proponents of the syllogism, and the opponents, their "audience." This less restrictive and more pragmatic form of logic came to be known as "inference based on what is acceptable to others" (*gzhan la grags kyi rjes dpag*). Though not necessarily different structurally, it does differ as concerns the requirements for its validity.

In this chapter we shall examine this controversy based on dGe lugs pa exegesis on this subject, in many ways the most extensive and detailed treatment of these questions in the corpus of Buddhist literature.

I. The Views of Two Opponents and the Interrelationship of Mistaken Views

We shall return presently to the specific question of the *svatantra*, but before doing so it is worth mentioning that this issue has tremendous implications for Madhyamaka ontology, epistemology, and logic as a whole. Before proceeding to our main subject, therefore, let us consider the context in which this discussion takes place. In the *sTong thun chen mo* of mKhas grub dGe legs dpal bzang we find that the issue is introduced in the context of the question of whether or not the Prasangikas * have any philosophical positions of their own. As I have demonstrated elsewhere, this question is a lively one, even to the present day.16 mKhas grub rje presents the position of an opponent as follows:

> The Prasangika* Madhyamikas* have no position of their own, no beliefs and nothing at all that they accept. Were they to have such beliefs, then they would also have to accept such things as syllogisms (*gtan tshigs*) that prove the beliefs of their own system, logical examples, and so forth. Were *that* so, they would in effect become Svatantrikas.17

The opponent here is claiming that Prasangikas* hold no philosophical positions,18 and that if they did they would essentially become Svatantrikas*, for they would have to rely on the use of syllogistic reasoning to establish these positions, the implication being that in the Madhyamaka school only Svatantrikas* use syllogisms.19 Here mKhas grub rje is portraying the opponent as operating under the faulty assumption that all syllogisms are *svatantras.* The opponent is thus portrayed as reasoning in the following way: if all syllogisms are *svatantras* and Prasangikas* reject the latter, they must also reject the former, in other words they must reject syllogistic reasoning and logic *in general* Syllo-

gisms are the instruments that prove or establish the tenets of any system. If Prasangikas * repudiate syllogistic reasoning, they could have no beliefs of their own, because they could have no tools with which to establish and defend these beliefs. Hence, concludes the opponent, the Prasangikas* have no system of tenets, no beliefs. The opponent further claims that whatever logical constructs Prasangikas* may employ and whatever views they may seem to set forth "are carried out for the sake of confronting others, without it being a reflection of the Prasangika's* own system."20

The dGe lugs pa, as we have seen, have a strong commitment to logic as a method, and this is an outgrowth of the fact that much of their work is directed at creating a synthesis of the Madhyamaka and Pramanika* schools. It is scarcely surprising that mKhas grub rje finds the viewpoint of the preceding opponent anathema. What is most interesting, however, is that he considers the source of the error to lie in erroneous *ontological* presuppositions, in the fact that the opponent advocates the "infamous" *yod min med min gyi lta ba*, an interpretation of the Madhyamaka in which the repudiation of the extremes of existence and nonexistence is taken literally. This of course is the view of Go ram pa described earlier, and it has as a corollary the rejection of the principle of noncontradiction. Of course for mKhas grub rje, who is a staunch advocate of this principle, there is no middle ground between existence and nonexistence. When the existence of something is repudiated, it is a tacit affirmation of its nonexistence, and vice versa. For this very reason dGe lugs pas like mKhas grub rje believe that the Madhyamaka repudiation of existence cannot be taken literally, and that instead the object rejected must be qualified as "*true or inherent* existence." For mKhas grub rje, the idea that things are literally neither existent nor nonexistent is at best nonsensical and at worst nihilisitic.21 He states, in this regard:

> Those who make such claims [that the Prasangikas repudiate reasoning and have no tenets of their own] have, as I have mentioned before, misapprehended the extent of what is to be refuted. Hence, they think that the reasoning of the Prasangika* Madhyamikas* repudiates all phenomena. Once

> they have repudiated everything, seeing that all of their arguments can be used to refute what they themselves believe, they discard the notion that all of those absurdities urged on others are applicable to themselves. But when such absurdities are urged upon them, being totally unaware of how to avert such arguments (when turned against them), their one last hope is to say "we accept nothing." 22

Here mKhas grub rje is claiming that the logical skepticism of these opponents (their view that the Prasangikas* accept nothing and repudiate syllogistic logic) is a corollary of their ontological nihilism (their view that the Prasangika* critique is a repudiation of the existence of all phenomena). Put in another way, mKhas grub rje is here claiming that this brand of logical skepticism is the last refuge of ontological nihilists, who, realizing that their own faulty arguments will soon be turned against them, attempt to immune themselves from logical fault by declaring themselves to have no position, appending to this the disclaimer that any logic they had used was employed only in confronting their challenger and not because they themselves ascribed to the validity of reasoning, syllogistic or otherwise.

What is perhaps most interesting about mKhas grub rje's analysis, a theme that we find repeated throughout the *sTong thun chen mo,* is his connection of ontological, logical, epistemological, and soteriological forms of skepticism or nihilism. For mKhas grub rje, the *yod min med min* view, which he characterizes as "refuting all phenomena" (ontological nihilism), the view that the Prasangikas* repudiate syllogistic reasoning and the law of noncontradiction (logical skepticism), the repudiation of the notion of pramana* or valid knowledge (epistemological skepticism), and the view that in meditation the mind is to be emptied of all thought (the "infamous" Hva shang view and a form of soteriological nihilism)23 are mutual implicates of each other. He sees each of these positions as not only tied to each other historically, but as being corrollaries of each other in the logical sphere as well. With this by way of contextualization, let us return now to our main topic, the discussion of the *svatantra.*

We saw that mKhas grub rje's first opponent held the position that all syllogisms are *svatantric* in nature and that because

Prasangikas * repudiate the latter, they must also repudiate syllogistic reasoning and logic in general. Another opponent is characterized as follows:

> Even Praisangikas* accept *svatantra* syllogistic reasoning (*rang rgyud kyi rtags*) because they accept trimodal syllogistic reasoning *(tshul gsum pa'i rtags)* that proves a specific quality (*khyad par kyi chos*) of a certain subject (*chos can*) that is established by the pramanas* of both the proponent [of the syllogism] and the opponent [to whom it is posited].24

This second opponent shares one presupposition with the first, namely, that all syllogisms are *svatantras.* However, realizing that it would be absurd to deny the Prasangikas'* use of logic, the second opponent maintains instead that, because Prasangikas* accept syllogistic reasoning, they must also accept *svatantras,* a position essentially the converse of that of the first opponent.

Both views, of course, are, in the opinion of the dGe lugs pa exegetes, faultythe source of their fault lies in their common presupposition that all syllogisms are *svatantric* in nature. mKhas grub rje's belief is that Prasangikas* accept trimodal syllogistic reasoning (*tshul gsum pa'i rtags*) but not of the *svatantra* variety.

II. The Definition of a Svatantra

What, then, characterizes a syllogism as being a *svatantra?* mKhas grub rje states:

> when positing a *svatantra* position or logical reason, it is not sufficient for both the proponent and the opponent to establish, by means of a pramana*, the subject of the inquiry (*shes 'dod chos can*), which is the basis upon which a predicate is posited. Instead, it is absolutely necessary that [the subject] be established compatibly (*mthun snang du*).25

But what does it mean to be "established compatibly"? Prasangikas* have a different notion of phenomena than do their realist opponents. When they posit a syllogism to a realist, they understand that the subject of the syllogism (and indeed all of its parts, including the trimodal relations) do not exist inherently. Despite this fact, Prasangikas* believe that entities appearÐ

to every consciousness (even the valid consciousness) of sentient beings to exist as if they were real and independent. Hence, they realize that the pramana * that perceives the subject of a syllogism is erroneous (*'khrul pa*). This of course is not so in the case of realists, for whom:

> all pramanas* are believed to be valid in regard to subjects that exist by virtue of their own characteristic. In their system, all pramanas* are consciousnesses that are nonerroneous in regard to their objects; it is believed [by them] that if the subject of a syllogism is established by a pramana*, then that very subject must be found (*rnyed don*) by the pramana*.26

Therefore, according to mKhas grub rje, a *svatantra* is a syllogism in which the subject is "established compatibly" in the system of both the proponent and opponent, where both parties consider it to be the object perceived by a pramana* that is nonerroneous in regard to the ontological status of the object. In other words, it is a syllogism in which both parties consider the subject to be a real, independent entity that is verified as such by a nonerroneous pramana*. Because this is inconsistent with the Prasangika* views (a) that no such entity exists and (b) that any consciousness to which an entity appears in this way must be erroneous, *svatantra* forms of syllogistic reasoning are unacceptable to this school.

III. Inference Based on What Is Renowned to Another

As we have seen, however, this does not mean that Prasangikas* repudiate syllogistic reasoning in general. Instead, they employ a form of syllogism known as "inference based on what is renowned to another" (*gzhan la grags pa'i rjes dpag*),27 which mKhas grub rje defines as

> a syllogistic reason in which the subject, though not perceived by pramana* in a way that is compatible to both proponents and opponents, is nonetheless perceived by a pramana* in the system of the proponents and by a pramana* in the system of the opponents, being posited (by the proponents) while involving themselves in (*'khris nas*) what

the opponents believe in their own system as regards the perception of the subject by a pramana *.28

In an "inference based on what is renowned to another" Prasangika* proponents will "involve themselves" in, that is, they will go along with, the opponents' notion of the nature of the subject and the pramana* that perceives it, all the time realizing that their own notion is completely different from, incompatible with, that of the opponent. Despite the incompatibility of the way in which the subject exists and the way in which the pramana* that perceives it functions for proponent and opponent, an "inference based on what is renowned to another" is nonetheless a valid trimodal syllogism. In this way, mKhas grub rje demonstrates that not all syllogistic reasoning is *svatantric* in nature, that there *does* exist a form of syllogistic reasoning that is in accord with Prasangika* Madhyamaka tenets, and therefore that this school does not repudiate logic in general.

Whether or not mKhas grub rje's analysis is truly representative of the Indian Madhyamaka tradition to which he claims to be heir is a question that does not concern us here. Bracketing that hermeneutical question, the starting point for the present discussion has been the simple fact that mKhas grub rje (and his teacher Tsong kha pa) interpret the repudiation of the *svatantra* as they do. Throughout, they view their efforts as an attempt to set straight the score concerning the Prasangikas'* views on logic, that, as we have seen, is part of a more general campaign: that of upholding the validity of rationality (the possibility of valid knowledge), language (its ability to describe reality), and logical principles (such as the law of non-contradiction). Understanding their defense of reason, language, and logic is pivotal to understanding the dGe lugs pas as scholastics.

Chapter 8
Language and Ontology

It may well be that nominalism is the most preferable of ontologies but we ought not to come by it merely by postulation.
J. Kaminsky 1

I. Alternative Formulations of the Doctrine of Emptiness

We have examined thus far the nature and workings of language primarily from an epistemological perspective. Both specific examples of language (e.g., scripture) and language in general have been explored as sources of knowledge. We have also examined what different scholastic texts perceive to be the *limits* of scripture and linguistic-conceptual thought. There is, however, another vantage point from which Indo-Tibetan scholasticism approaches the subject of language, and this has to do with the role that language plays in ontology, that is, in regard to questions of existence and being. This is especially important because from its very origins Buddhist philosophy has shown tendencies toward nominalism.2

For our purposes, *nominalism* can be defined as the philosophical position that relates the existence of objects to their names. For the more radical nominalists the only reality objects have is that imparted to them in the process of naming them. This understanding of nominalism is different, though not unrelated, to the way it is understood in the context of European medieval philosophy.3 Medieval Christian philosophers were

preoccupied primarily with the locus and ontological status of universals. Are universals or general terms separate from the particulars that they name as classes? Do they abide within particulars (either as part or whole) or are they simply mental conceptions in the mind, mere names (*nomina*)? 4 We shall see from what follows that questions such as these were not unknown to the Buddhist scholastics (especially to the Pramanikas*). It will become clear, however, that some Buddhist schools went much further in their nominalist claims than their European medieval counterparts. For the Madhyamaka school, for example, it was not only universals that were mental imputations and mere names, but *all phenomena*, including the ultimate truth.

Emptiness, in Mahayana* Buddhist philosophy, is the final mode of being of all phenomena, the ultimate truth. The complementary notion is of course that of conventional phenomena, a category that includes every existent thing other than emptiness. When we speak of the role that language plays in Mahayana* ontology, we are concerned with the relationship of language to the two truths, 5 ultimate and conventional, and especially with the role that language plays in the formulation of the doctrine of emptiness.

Hillary Putnam once said that all of philosophy could be considered twice, once from a classical, preanalytical, perspective and once again from the viewpoint of language.6 This is an especially interesting observation in a scholastic Buddhist context, for we do indeed find that the doctrine of emptiness in the different schools of Mahayana* scholasticism can be formulated once from the viewpoint of classical ontology and then once again from a linguistic perspective. In both the idealist (Yogacara*) and nominalist (Madhyamaka) schools we find alternative formulations of the doctrine, some linguistic in nature and some only minimally concerned with the issue of language.

For example, in the Yogacara* or Cittamatra* (mind-only) school, the traditional formulation of emptiness is expressed in terms of the nonduality (the emptiness of the duality) of cognizing subject and cognized object. 7 However, an alternative formulation exists, as we shall see, that makes this same point by analyzing the weak nature of the relationship between words

and their referents. Both formulations are said to be equivalent, each implying the other. Likewise, in the Madhyamaka, one formulation of emptiness characterizes it as the absence of true or inherent existence within phenomena. In the alternative linguistic formulation, however, emptiness is characterized as the fact that the referent labeled by a term is not found when searched for by an analysis that examines the ultimate nature of the object. 8 As a corollary, the Prasangikas* maintain that nothing exists except as a linguistic label, that things are "mere names," "mere labels." Therefore, throughout the history of Mahayana* Buddhist scholastic thought there have always existed important alternative formulations of questions having to do with emptiness and with the nature of conventional truth, some expressed in ontological terms, others in linguistic ones. 9

II. The Linguistic Formulation of Emptiness in the Yogacara*

II.A. Two Theories and Their Equivalence

As we have seen, the Yogacara* school of Mahayana* scholasticism formulates the doctrine of emptiness in two principal ways. One is the expression of the doctrine in classical, ontological terms, focusing on nonduality; the other is linguistic, emphasizing the weakness of the relationship of words to their referents. In his *sTong thun chen mo*,10 mKhas grub rje criticizes the view that Yogacara* texts can be distinguished into those that take the metaphysical or ontological perspective and those that take the linguistic approach in formulating the doctrine of emptiness. If his critique is an indication of some of the intellectual trends of the time, it implies that there may have been prevalent a theory in which the ontological formulation was taken to have been the exclusive domain of some Yogacara* texts, for example, the Pramanavarttika* of Dharmakirti*, while the linguistic version was considered the sole focus of the works of Asafiga and Vasubandhu. 11 The rival theory would have suggested, therefore, that Yogacara* texts could be categorized into these two types, depending upon which formulation of the doctrine of emptiness they expounded.

However, mKhas grub rje criticizes this viewpoint. Although willing to accept that the Pramanavarttika * may *emphasize* nonduality and that Asafiga's Bodhisattvabhumi*12 *emphasizes* the linguistic interpretation, he is clearly opposed to the notion that each work is committed exclusively to one unique formulation. mKhas grub rje states that both Dharmakirti* and Asanga espouse *both* formulations of emptiness. Moreover, he claims that these two interpretations are equivalent and complementary13 and that this equivalence must be understood if one is to obtain an accurate and complete understanding of the Yogacara14 Finally, it is mKhas grub rje's assertion that the exegesis of his master, Tsong kha pa, on this point is the first native Tibetan exposition, both of the linguistic interpretation and of its equivalence to the traditional ontological one (nonduality). 15

I.B. The Basic Formulation

According to dGe lugs pa exegesis on the fundamental texts of the Yogacara*, words can act in one of two ways. The name corresponding to a referent object, say a pot, acts to predicate16 an "essential" quality of the object. Hence, to call a pot *pot,* to say "this is a pot," or to state tautologies of the form "a pot is a pot" or "this pot is a pot" is to enagage in what he calls *essential predication.* "Specific" forms of predication are cases in which other, more general, nontautological and specific qualities are ascribed to the object. Hence, "the pot is created" and "the impermanence of the pot..." are instances where specific qualities are predicated of the pot.

Insofar as a pot *is* a pot and in as much as it *is* created and *is* impermanent, the pot can be said to be the basis of essential predicates like "pot" and of specific predicates like "the creation of the pot" and "the impermenence of the pot." In other words, the pot is indeed the referent of such essential and specific terms and expressions. However, it is *not* the referent of such terms *by virtue of its own characteristic,* which is to say that, according to the Yogacara*, the pot does not contain within it, ontologically, any essential quality by virtue of which it is the

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basis or referent of such expressions. The connection between the pot as the referent of these expressions and the expressions themselves is not as rigid as it appears to be. Nothing inherent in the pot, of necessity, makes it the referent of such expressions.

This fact, that no object is, by virtue of its own characteristic, the basis of essential and specific terms that are predicated of it, according to the Yogacaras *, is a statement as to the emptiness of phenomena. It is the linguistic formulation of the Yogacara* doctrine of nonduality. In addition, there is a method of rephrasing this linguistic interpretation so that it becomes a statement about conceptual thought. This is, of course, nothing new, in view of the isomorphism between language and conceptual thought we encountered earlier. In psychological terms, then, the emptiness of the pot could just as easily be said to be the fact that it is not, by virtue of its own characteristic, the cognitive basis (*zhen gzhi*) of the conceptual consciousness (*rtog* pa) that predicates (*'dogs pa*) essential and specific (qualities) of the pot. Whether formulated psychologically, that is, in terms of conceptual thought, or linguistically, the idea is the same. The connection, the relationship, between words and their referents is much weaker than it appears to be. That this is a more than adequate foundation for an idealistic ontology, which the Yogacara* of course espouses, should be evident. The weaker the connection between words and objects (or between conceptual thought and *its* objects), the more straightforward will be the repudiation of objects as external entities existing in their own right, independent of language and thought.

I.C. The Sautrantika and the Yogacara* Compared*

A detailed comparison between the Sautrantika* realists and the Yogacara* idealists would of necessity be very extensive and complex, given the nature of the questions involved. Because it is covered in great detail throughout the Yogacara* section of mKhas grub rje's *sTong thun chen mo*, a work I have translated, it would be redundant to recapitulate this exposition here. 17 However, several points are worth mentioning as regards the differences between the Sautrantika* and Yogacara*, points that are

central to the understanding of the role that language plays in the ontology of both of these schools.

The Sautrantikas *,18 as we have seen, divide phenomena into real particulars, svalaksanas*, and universals, samanyalaksanas*. The former are the appearing objects of sense perception and the latter the appearing objects of conceptual thought. According to mKhas grub rje, and this is disputed by other dGe lugs pa scholars, in the Sautrantika* system for something to be a svalaksana* (*rang mtshan*) is for that thing to exist by virtue of its own characteristic (*rang gi mtshan nyid kyis grub pa*) and vice versa. 19 Finally, let us be reminded of the fact that the Sautrantikas* consider conceptual-linguistic consciousness to be erroneous. Whereas the appearing objects of sense perceptions are real particulars, that is, *svalaksanas*, the appearing objects (*snang yul*) of conceptual thoughts and the meanings (*brjod bya*) expressed by words are universals, that is, samanyalaksanas* . Sense perception is nonerroneous. Conceptual-linguistic thought, however, is erroneous because it confuses its appearing object with the real particular.

Up to this point the Yogacaras* are said to be in agreement with the Sautrantikas*. The former, however, go even farther in their claims. Let us examine the points of similarity first. The predication of a quality, whether an essential or a specific one, is an imaginary entity. 20 This is equivalent to saying that a thing is not, by virtue of its own characteristic, the meaning or subject matter (*brjod bya*) of words. Likewise, a thing's being the cognitive basis (*zhen gzhi*) of conceptual thought is also something that does not exist by virtue of its own characteristic. 21 This, in turn, is equivalent to the fact that a thing is not, by virtue of its own characteristic, the cognitive object (*zhen yul*) of conceptual thought. Why are things not, by virtue of their own characteristic, by virtue of their svalaksana*-hood, the meaning of words and the cognitive objects of conceptual thought? It is because these latter entities are universals. They are not real particulars.

An entity, like form, *appears* to conceptual-linguistic thought to be, by virtue of its own characteristic, the referent of essential and specific predicates. Again, both the Sautrantikas

and the Yogacaras * consider conceptual-linguistic thought to be in error in this regard. They both consider conceptual thought to be erroneous, and this is why they claim that things do not exist as they appear to conceptual thought. In all of the ways outlined previously the Yogacaras* and Sautrantikas* have no qualms with each other's positions. The Yogacaras*, however, would like to go even farther in their claims. They would like to maintain that the error of grasping at the self of phenomena, namely, the apprehension that things are, by virtue of their own characteristic, the bases of essential and specific predicates, is present not only in conceptual thought but in sense perception as well. 22 For the Yogacaras*, the error of dualism is present even to the senses. This leads them to claim that things appear to be, by virtue of their own characteristic, the basis of essential and specific predicates *even to the eye consciousness*, for example. This position, however, is anathema to the Sautrantikas*. Though willing to accept that things appear in this way to conceptual thought, where the meanings of words are confused with the real particulars, they are not willing to accept that the same thing happens in sense perception, which for them is the paradigm of accuracy. 23 Therefore, the Sautrantikas* and Yogacaras* differ as regards the extent of what appears to sense perception and hence as regards the pervasiveness of error within the mind. The former restricts error to conceptual thought, the latter is willing to grant that error can be present even in sense perception.

How do we know that this error is present even in sense perception? The basic Yogacara* answer is that we know *from experience* that it exists in conceptual thought, and that its presence within conceptual thought is evidence of the fact that it must be present in sense perception, because sense perception is what elicits conceptual thought and language. 24 Even if we grant that its presence in sense perception might be what causes the error to arise in conceptual thought, there still remains to be seen what causes the error to be present in *sense perception* in the first place. According to the dGe lugs pas, this very question motivates the Yogacara* to develop a theory of latent potentialities (bija*, *sa bon;* or *bag chags*, vasana*).25

The doctrine of vasanas * also has a linguistic element. The appearance of blue to the eye consciousness is due to "concordant latent potentialities" (sajatiyavasana**, *rigs mthun kyi bag chags*), that is, due to the fact that the eye consciousness has experienced the color blue before. The fact that it appears to the eye consciousness to be the basis of essential and specific predicates is due to "linguistic latent potentialities" (abhilapavasana**, *mngon par brjod pa'i bag chags*), that have been deposited in the foundation consciousness (alaya*, *kun gzhi*) due to the fact that we have engaged in such predication, through linguistic and conceptual means, in the past. Finally, the fact that blue appears not only as the referent of its name and of other predicates but that it appears to be this *by virtue of its own characteristic* is something brought about due to the third major kind of latent potentiality, that of "the view of the self" (atmadrstivasana**, *bdag Ita'i bag chags*). In this way the different portions of what appears to a single sense perception are elicited by the different kinds of seeds present within the foundation, or storehouse, consciousness. Some of these appearances then go on to deposit new seeds of their own; others proceed to elicit conceptual consciousnesses, which in turn deposit seeds that later ripen as new portions of what appears to other sense perceptions. The process is cyclical and can be broken only by the cognition of emptiness and by the eventual attainment of buddhahood.

I.D. The Proof

The reasoning used to prove the Yogacaras'* linguistic formulation of emptiness is explained in detail in the *sTong thun chen mo.*26 There is no need to repeat all of these arguments here, but a synopsis of them would help us to understand the basis of this interpretation, and especially the nature of the perceived weakness of the relationship between word and referent.

The reasoning, we must remember, is aimed at proving that things are not, "independently and from their own side," the bases of their names. If they were, states the Mahayanasamgraha*, then a thing should be able to elicit its name even before the name was ever created, this name should be unique and identical

in every culture and language, and for every name there should be a unique object. These arguments are meant to demonstrate that the relationship between word and referent is much weaker and more arbitrary than it normally seems. A thing has no power to name itself. The name is given and becomes established through common usage. One object can have many names, and many objects can be designated by the same name. If names were related to their referents in a strong, that is, essentialistic, way, so the argument goes, this diversity and ambiguity in language would imply certain ontological identities (the identity of everything with the same name, for example) or differences (the difference of everything with different names), something that we know not to be the case from experience. In short, a word and its referent simply do not have as strong a connection as they seem to have.

I.E. Conclusion

We have examined in some detail a sample of dGe lugs pa exegesis on the Yogacara * formulation of the linguistic interpretation of emptiness. We have seen that it is perceived to be equivalent to their doctrine of nonduality and have briefly explored the extent to which it resembles (and how it differs from) the tenets of the Sautrantika* realists. Finally, we have offered a very brief overview of the proofs they set forth for the validity of this theory. In the Yogacara* view, as portrayed in the *sTong thun chen mo*, understanding the error as it occurs in conceptual thought undermines it. This leads to an understanding of the erroneous nature of sense perception. Then, realizing that even the objects that appear to sense consciousness are erroneously perceived, one is led to conclude that no cognition is elicited under the power of an external object. This, of course, brings the adept to an understanding of nonduality that, for the Yogacaras*, is the primary liberative force.

II. The Linguistic Formulation of Emptiness in the Madhyamaka

As in the Yogacara*, the doctrine of emptiness in the Madhyamaka can be approached from a number of different perspectives.

There is, for example, an epistemological formulation, in which emptiness is characterized as the object perceived by the superior gnosis (jnana *, *ye shes*) of an aryan. 27 Here, emptiness is characterized as the object perceived by a superior form of knowledge: the object of the transcendental wisdom of a superior being. There is, of course, the ontological formulation, mentioned previously, where emptiness is characterized as the lack of inherent existence in phenomena, as the fact that nothing exists independently and from its own side, with the corollary that all things depend on other phenomena for their existence. There is a soteriological formulation, where emptiness is described as that object which, when perceived, purifies the defilements and afflictions. Finally, there is a linguistic formulation, to which we now turn.

II.A. The Inability of Objects to Withstand Logical Analysis

When expressed in terms of language, emptiness can be characterized as the fact that the referent object labeled by a term cannot be found when searched for by means of logical analysis (*tha nsyad brtags pa'i rtags don tshal nas ma brnyed pa*). In the Madhyamaka (at least in the dGe lugs pa interpretation of the Prasangika* school) nothing can withstand the weight ofnothing can bearlogical analysis. However one formulates it, the starting point of the analysis is language, and language is the culmination as well. The purpose of the dialectic is to make clear that there is nothing substantial behind language, that instead of language being a window looking onto a real world, it is a window into nothingness. All that exists, according to this view, are the conventionalities created by the use of language in the world. Beyond these there is nothing, and should we attempt to search for those real referents to which language is expected to point, we find nothing. This fact is emptiness.

Although a great deal could be said in this regard, we content ourselves here with merely highlighting some of the main points of the Madhyamaka formulation of emptiness in linguistic terms. As we mentioned earlier, the analysis begins with language, with a word, which is the most basic of entities.

Whether or not things truly exist and whether or not there are external objects may be points of contention, but for Buddhists (much as thought for Descartes) language is, in a sense, a given, a basis that is beyond doubt. No one can deny that we name things, that we use language, and that such usage can lead to effective action. Hence, it is natural and sensible to begin the analysis with words, with what is truly primitive.

The analysis then proceeds from words to the status of the referents of words, the nature of the objects labeled by words. No Buddhist, Madhyamika * or otherwise, would deny that words have referents, that the word *pot* refers to something. 28 Buddhists, however, differ as to the nature of those referents and as to the strength of the relationship they bear to language. We have just witnessed the Yogacara* stance on these questions. The Madhyamaka position is even more radical than the Yogacara's* in this respect. Prasangika* Madhyamikas (at least according to dGe lugs pas) take the nominalist tendencies present throughout the history of Buddhism to their logical conclusion. For the Madhyamaka, words do have referents, but these referents have no substance to them, being themselves merely labeled entities that depend on other labeled entities, and so on ad infinitum. Every entity depends on other entities in a giant web where the only reality is the interrelatedness of the entities. There is no real substratum to this universe, and the only existence that things can be said to have is a very weak, conventional one that is reflected in the patterns of interconnection, that is, in the usage of language. What emerges is a picture of a world of elements in free fall. Because they all fall at the same rate, however, there is the appearance of solidity; but in fact there is no stable substratum on which they all rest. To analyze this world, then, is to look beyond this frame of reference and to realize its lack of a foundation. The same happens in our own world. As long as we are content to use language (and this does not mean "ordinary" language exclusively, for the dGe lugs pas do not want to eliminate the possibility of specialized philosophical discourse) in accordance with accepted usage, the stability of the world, such as it is, is preserved, but as soon as we begin to search beyond language, demanding solidity, that is, real refer-

ents, then problems emerge. Those referents, when submitted to such an analyisis, when they become the objects of such a search, disappear.

II.B. The Twofold Nature of the Analysis

What is the nature of the analysis under whose weight things disappear? As mentioned earlier, because the referents of words do indeed exist, they must be perceived or established by valid forms of knowledge. This, after all, is the definition of an existent thingthat it be ascertainable by valid knowledge. Hence, when submitted to certain kinds of scrutiny, the referents of words must be "findable," because they are indeed "found" by valid knowledge. 29 It is not, therefore, under the weight of *such* analyses, called *conventional analyses*, that objects are lost. In the dGe lugs pa interpretation it is considered essential to distinguish between two kinds of analysis: conventional and ultimate. Everything that exists must be able to be established through a conventional analysis, because it must be established (that is, cognized) by valid knowledge. This, of course, is consonant with the dGe lugs pas' insistence on preserving the conventional existence of phenomena and the conventional validity of logic. They claim, however, that nothing can withstand an *ultimate* analysis, the kind of search that seeks to find the ultimate and final nature of an object.

The method of engaging in an ultimate analysis, sometimes called *giving thought to the essence* (*rang bzhin seres pa la zhugs pa*), is described in various dGe lugs pa sources. 30 It involves, for example, "analyzing whether or not the referent objects onto which the names are labeled exist by [examining] whether or not they are the same substance as or different substances from their parts." 31 According to the dGe lugs pas, the analysis proceeds by first determining what the object would be like if it truly or inherently existed, that is, by determining whether there holds a set of all-inclusive relations32 between the referent of a term (*brags don*) and the basis of the labeling (*brags gzhi*), the object's parts. 33 Then, by demonstrating that none of these relations (e.g., one/many/both/neither, same/different/

both/neither) is tenable, the possibility of a truly existent referent is eliminated, leaving as the only conclusion that the entity under analysis is something that is merely labeled by name and conceptual thought. The procedure is to assume that the object under consideration truly exists and to demonstrate contradictions in all the possibilities concerning the relationship of the object to its parts. "Not finding" then implies that contradictions are determined to exist along all of the lines one investigates. 34 This "not finding" is the understanding of the "essence" (*rang bzhin*), the "reality" (*gaas lugs*), of the object, that is, its emptiness. 35

II.C. A Misinterpretation and the dGe lugs pa Response

As we saw in Chapter Seven, the dGe lugs pas criticize many of their opponents for failing to make a distinction between conventional and ultimate analyses, and hence for confusing them. Though couched there in epistemological termsthe question of the possibility of syllogistic reasoningthe point being made by the dGe lugs pas here is essentially the same, that the repudiation of analysis at the ultimate level does not imply its repudiation in a conventional setting. Some opponents36 believe that because phenomena "cannot withstand logical analysis"that they "cannot be found when subjected to such an examination"they must be nonexistent. mKhas grub rje points out that what is being referred to in the context of the linguistic formulation of emptiness is the inability of phenomena to withstand an *ultimate* analysis. That an ultimate analysis does not find an example of the referent of the term under investigation does not in any way imply that a conventional analysisconventional logic and valid forms of knowledgecannot substantiate the existence of phenomena. mKhas grub rje's opponents seem to believe that things do not exist because they cannot withstand logical analysis, and they maintain that they cannot therefore be validated by logic. 37 The dGe lugs pas go to great lengths to demonstrate that such an interpretation of the Madhyamaka is faulty, based as it is on the false assumption that the "analysis" spoken of is only of one kind, when in actuality two forms of

analysis must be considered: a conventional one, which validates the existence of phenomena, and an ultimate one, under whose scrutiny no phenomenon can be found.

II.D. Differences With Other Schools

The linguistic formulation of emptiness just described is an exclusively Prasangika * Madhyamaka formulation. This is made very clear, for example, by mKhas grub rje. 38 The Svatantrika* Madhyamikas, according to the dGe lugs pas, do not accept the notion that phenomena cannot withstand analysis. Being of the opinion that there must be a substratum to the world, and more moderate in their critique of essentialism than the more radical Prasangikas*,39 they hold that something *is* found when a thing is subjected to an ultimate analysis. This very stance is seen by mKhas grub rje as one of the great inconsistencies in the Svatantrika* position.

A corollary to the Svatantrika* view is the position that, though things are labeled by language and conceptual thought, phenomena are not *mere* labels, for in addition to the labeling process that occurs via language-conceptual thought there exists a substratum, some form of characteristic existence, inherent in the object that makes such labeling possible. The Prasangikas'* radical nominalism, of course, allows for no such substratum. When the Prasangikas* characterize things as "mere names" and "mere labels," they are, by the word *mere*, repudiating the Svatantrika* notion that the object exists by virtue of its own characteristic. Hence, the Prasangikas'* relentless critique of essentialism and their corresponding radical nominalism are two sides of the same coin, each entailing the other.

The hierarchy of Buddhist philosophical schools, from the Vaibhasika and Sautrantika to the Yogacara*, Svatantrika*, and Prasangika Madhyamaka, represents' a pan-Tibetan scholastic scheme for ordering different systems of tenets (siddhanta*, *grub mtha'*) according to the degree to which they approach reality, the Prasangikas'* position being considered, at least by the dGe lugs pas, the perfect view (*yang dag pa'i lta ba*).40 At the same time we

find that, as we ascend the ladder from more "inaccurate" to more "accurate" representations of reality, there is a clear and gradual increase in the tendency toward nominalism. The Sautrantikas *, as represented in some Pramanika* literature, are of course realists who maintain that all phenomena truly exist. In their attempt to explain the differences between sense perception and conceptual thought, however, they create a category of imaginary universals that act as the filters through which conceptual thought works. This category of imaginary universals is considered by the Sautrantikas* to be composed of phenomena that are the mere labels of name and thought. As mKhas grub rje points out, 41 however, even these entities are said to be connected back to a real world of *svalaksanas*, being abstractions arrived at through the perceptions of real particulars. The Yogacaras*, of course, are willing to go further in what they classify as the category of phenomena that exist only as mental labels. They would argue that not only the appearing objects of conceptual thought, but even certain of the objects that appear to sense perception have only nominal existence. Be that as it may, neither the Sautrantikas* nor the Yogacaras* are willing to predicate mere nominal existence of *all* phenomena. Though the Svatantrika* Madhyamikas* would grant that all phenomena are labeled by name and conceptual thought, they are unwilling to accept that phenomena are *mere* labels, that they exist *only*, nominally. As we have seen, dGe lugs pas portray the Svatantrikas* as clinging to a notion of characteristic existence, a notion that prevents them from being "true" nominalists. Only the Prasangikas*, with their radical critique of essentialism, are said to accept the *merely*, nominal existence of *all* phenomena.

II.E. Nominalism and the Idea of According with Worldly Usage

We have seen that nominalism, the notion that all phenomena are "mere names" and "mere labels," is perceived to be a corollary of the fact that nothing can withstand logical analysis. According to dGe lugs pa exegesis, when an ultimate analysis is performed and the referent of a certain word cannot be found, it

is nominalism that the Prasangika * Madhyamikas* envision as rescuing them from nihilism. When a referent is searched for and not found, is it nonexistent? No, responds the Prasangika, for the object can still be said to exist *nominally*. Hence, nominal existence is the fine line between true or inherent existence on the one hand, and nonexistence, on the other. It is viewed as the ontological middle way between eternalism and nihilism. 42

Throughout the history of the Madhyamaka, but especially in the works of Candrakirti and his later Tibetan commentators, we find the Madhyamaka described as a school of thought that "accords with the world" or "with the worldly usage of terminology" (lokavyavahara, *'jig rten pa'i tha snyad*). The idea is pivotal to the Madhyamaka, and interestingly, the interpretation of this notion offered by mKhas grub rje is intimately connected to his nominalist stance. He rejects the fact that *according with worldly usage* refers to any kind of "ordinary language" philosophy. 43 As an upholder of one of the most analytical traditions in Buddhism, a tradition that relies heavily on specialized terminology, mKhas grub rje is unwilling to give up the uncommon, that is, philosophical, use of language. "According with worldly usage," he states, does not mean "according with worldly idiots who are ignorant of philosophical tenets." 44 The technical philosophical use of words cannot be repudiated, for mastery of it is essential to a conceptual understanding of doctrine that, as we have seen, is a prerequisite to spiritual development.

What is meant then by the claim that Prasangikas* "accord with worldly usage"? Worldly beings45 use language without analyzing the referents of words. 46 We use language and we act without demanding to know the exact nature of the referents of the words we use, and as long as we do so, language functions properly. It is only when we become unsatisfied with the use of language (both ordinary and technical) as an efficacious means of communication and begin to search for an underlying substratum that problems arise. As we have seen, when one searches for the referents of words in this way, the objects being searched for vanish under the weight of the analysis. The following example is given in the classical sources. Suppose we desire to meet a certain man. mKhas grub rje states that "were it [first]

necessary to find that he existed in such and such a way before meeting him, then the meeting would be impossible, for if we search for him in this manner, he is not found to exist in any way." 47

We see, therefore, the connection between nominalism and the Prasangika's* theory of "according with worldly usage." It is due to the fact that things exist only nominally, that is, it is due to there being no essential substratum undergirding language, that using language only in the way it is used by worldly beings, without subjecting it to analysis, is possible. Language, in short, can never withstand extended probing because the conventional existence it represents is weak and arbitrary, as is language itself. It is because the Madhyamikas* use language without subjecting it to this type of analysisbecause they use it as ordinary beings dothat they are said to "accord with worldly usage."

III. Conclusion

The way it is interpreted by dGe lugs pa exegesis, the Yogacara* formulation of emptiness in linguistic terms is motivated by the wish to create a distinction between their own idealistic tenets and the "realism" of the Sautrantikas*. Indeed, if the dGe lugs pas are correct, much of the Yogacara's* linguistic formulation is intelligible only in light of the examination of Sautrantika* tenets. It is especially the intention of the Yogacara* school to demonstrate the weakness of the relationship between words and their referents, to characterize a "strong" view of this relation as the most basic kind of ignorance (the apprehension of the self of phenomena), and to demonstrate the presence of this false appearance even within sense perception. 48

In a similar way, the dGe lugs pas characterize the radical nominalism of the Prasangikas* as a response to the "realism" that preceded them. Whereas the Sautrantikas'* nominalist claims are restricted only to imaginary universals (only these are characterized as "existing merely nominally"),49 the Yogacaras* extend their nominalism even to some of the entities that appear to sense perception, thereby enlarging the category of things

that "exist as the mere labels of names and conceptual thought." The Svatantrika * Madhyamikas*, as we have seen, go even further, claiming that *all* phenomena are "labeled by name and thought." Only the Prasangikas*, however, consider in one sweeping gesture *all* phenomena, not only as "the labels of name and thought," but as entities that are "*merely* labeled by name and thought," thereby propounding the most radical nominalism of *all* phenomena.

We have seen that for the Madhyamikas* in general, but especially for the Prasangikas*, nominalism is viewed as an alternative to nihilism. It is, on the one hand, a corollary to the Prasangika* critique of essentialism and, on the other, a rebuttal to the accusations of nihilism. Briefly, then, in the context of ontology, language acts as a neutral basis from which ontologi-cal questions can be raised; it is used (both by the Yogacaras* and the Madhyamikas*) as a means for characterizing the nature of conventional truth; and it is considered one of the principal doctrines guarding the tradition from accusations of nihilism.

Chapter 9
Ineffability and the Silence of Buddha

*From the moment of his enlightenment to the time he passed away, the Tathagata * has not uttered a single word.*
Popular Buddhist saving

Or is this also worthy to be marvelled at, that the soul should, through the seeming strangeness, consider the words to be veils and believe the truth to be beyond speech?
Sallustius*1*

The Bodhisattva Diamond-essence looked in the ten directions and, in order to make all of the assembly grow even greater in faith, said these stanzas at that time:

(1) Being subtle, it is difficult to understand, this path of the Great Ascetic.

Being the object of neither conception nor nonconception, it is difficult to see.

In essence it is pacified, neither ceasing nor arising.

Only by a sage with clear understanding can it be known.

(2) Pacified is this emptiness of essence, the exhaustion of suffering,

The liberation from continuity, *nirvana*.

Having neither extreme nor middle, it is not expressible in words.

The liberation of all three times is like, it is similar to, space.

(3) The object perceived by the Sugatas is pacified, utterly pacified,

Difficult to utter by any vocal means.

Likewise are their levels and practices.

Hence, being difficult to enunciate, how can they be taught?

(4) By contemplating this, all mental paths are eliminated.

What has been actualized in gnosis is the object perceived by the Conquerors.

It is not born by (merely analyzing) the aggregates, sense objects and elements.

It is not understood by mind nor analyzed by mental consciousness.

(5) Just as the tracks of a bird who soars through the skies

Are difficult to identify, cannot be shown,

Likewise, the levels of the sons of the Sugata cannot be known

By means of mental or conscious elements.

(6) Nonetheless out of his love and compassion

It was explained partially, in a systematic way,

So that what is not an object perceived by the mind

Comes to be perfected by gnosis.

(7) Such an object is subtle and difficult to see

And, since it is cognized within, it cannot be expressed.

Nonetheless, it has been enunciated through the power of the Sugata.

So listen earnestly, all of you, in harmony.

(8) The various levels and practices of gnosis

Cannot be exhausted in a million eons.

The fact that [gnosis] abides on the perfect object and on nothing else

Has only been explained in the *sutras;* so listen to them.

(9) With harmony and earnestness, abide in readiness.

For, blessed by the Sugata, I will explain.

With proper example and moderation in letters,

The holy sound of the doctrine will I express.

(10) So difficult is it to express in words,

But through the power of infinite Sugatas, today it abides,

Like one single drop of water, within this body of mine.

So listen to my explanation. 2

In his study of Christian mysticism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, *The Mystic Fable,*3 Michel de Certeau identifies "mystics" as the unique discourse or rhetoric of the contemplative literature popular between the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. *Mystics* is a "manner of speaking" (*modus loquendi*) that is:

> the outcome of the opposition between waning of trust in discourse and the Godaffirming assurance that the spoken word cannot be lacking. It oscillates between these two poles and finds, nonetheless, ways of speaking. Moreover, behind the illocutionary tactics that invent "words for that," there is, ultimately, the principle of a concord between the infinite and language. 4

The passage from the *Avatamsaka* Sutra*, quoted at length, demonstrates in a very vivid way that this same "opposition" as

regards language also exists in Buddhism. We see exemplified here, sometimes even to the point of contradiction, the tension, or as de Certeau calls it, the *oscillation*, that exists between the fact that language acts as an instrument for communicating the Buddha's doctrine and the fact that in some important sense it falls short of this task. Despite the repeated claims as to the ineffability of the ultimate truth in Buddhist texts, it is clear that even the least scholastic of Buddhist sects are reticent to give up the communicative abilities of language in general and scripture in particular. Buddhist texts, however, are not univocal in their claims concerning ineffability. 5 What is more, the fact that many Buddhist sources stress the inexpressibility of the Buddha's most profound doctrines never hindered traditional scholars from composing and compiling a corpus of religious literature that can be described only as one of the most extensive in the world. The Buddha himself spent almost the last fifty years of his life teaching!

However, this tension, the claim of ineffability at the level of ideology and the commitment to doctrinal exposition in practice, is, as we have seen, not unique to Buddhism. In addition to the work of de Certeau, David Burrell has shown that reconciling God's ineffable-unknowable nature with the fact that a variety of qualities had been, and continued to be, predicated of God was a major concern for quintessential medieval European scholastics the likes of Maimonides and Aquinas. 6 A. C. Graham has also discussed this conundrum and offered *his own* attempt at reconciliation, at least as it might apply to the case of Chuang-tzu. 7 In this chapter we shall explore the ways in which the claim concerning the inexpressibility of the Buddha's insight and doctrine has been variously interpreted in different Buddhist scholastic texts.

In our discussion of scripture, and language in general, we have witnessed how the dGe lugs pas defend the linguistic-analytical method so crucial to scholasticism. Though it must eventually be transcended in the direct experience of realization, it is clear that scripture and inferential reasoning play an indispensable role in the spiritual path, especially at the beginnning stages. It should not come as a surprise, therefore,

to find that dGe lugs pa exegetes are utterly opposed to an interpretation of ineffability-inconceivability that does away with the ability of language-conceptual thought to express or cognize points of doctrine. Such a radical interpretation would totally undermine one of the most basic axioms of dGe lugs pa hermeneutics; namely, that anything that exists (including any point of doctrine, down to the most subtle) can be expressed by language and cognized by inferential cognition.

Again, this is not to say that language and conceptual thought do not have their limits. The fact that the Buddha's consciousness is said to be nonconceptual is a clear indication that conceptual thought must eventually be transcended. Nonetheless, the fact that language and conceptual thought are limited in this way does not, from a scholastic point of view, undermine the ability of words to express reality, nor does it vitiate the fact that such linguistic-conceptual understanding is indispensable in the spiritual journey that culminates in buddhahood. From the outset, dGe lugs pas have pitted themselves against the other Tibetan schools that advocate a more radical form of ineffability. We see this in the debate over Bodhicaryavatara * (IX,2), in which reality is said not to be "the object of the mind";8 we see it in the dGe lugs pa critique of the position of "the ones who go too far in their identification of the object of refutation" (*khyab che ba*), especially as regards their assertion that the Prasangika* school holds no philosophical position; 9 we see it in the treatment of the "fourteen undeclared views" (discussed later), and in many other contexts.

Ineffability has been the subject of a great deal of Western buddhological literature. 10 It has struck many a scholar that the investigation of inexpressibility should begin by examining an actual instance of nonexpression, the silence of the Buddha. We will focus our discussion, therefore, on the question of the Buddha's silence in the context of the "undeclared points" (avyakrtavastu*, *lung ma bstan gyi dngos po*), a topic that elicits some of the most central issues regarding ineffability. Though this too has been dealt with quite extensively in the Western literature, the dGe lugs pa perspective on the issue has yet to be explored in any significant way by Western scholars, and it is to this that we now turn.

I. Some Western Interpretations

We will deal with the enumeration and typology of the fourteen views in more detail later. For now let us simply say that these are points on which the Buddha refused to express an opinion. They concern such issues as the end of the world, its permanence, the post-mortem existence of the Tathagata *, and the relationship of the self to the body. When posed with such questions by members of non-Buddhist schools, the Buddha is said to have "answered" by remaining silent.

The Buddha's silence in regard to these fourteen views has been interpreted in a number of ways by Western buddhologists. Murti11 discusses three interpretations he finds faulty: (1) the practical or pragmatic one based on the The Calamalunkya* *Sutta,* in which the Buddha compares speculative metaphysics to the situation in which a man who has been wounded by an arrow demands to know all of the details of the incident before seeking medical help; this approach claims that the Buddha criticized this type of speculation in favor of a strictly pragmatic approach to religion; 12 (2) agnosticismthe claim that the Buddha found no satisfaction in any of the views prevalent during his day; (3) negativethe claim that the Buddha was a nihilist. Murti calls all three "specimens of the incorrect reading of Buddhism" and offers instead his own solution. He states that the Buddha's silence must be interpreted as a Kantian critique of speculative metaphysics, as a critique of dogmatism (ditthivada*), and as a statement of the limits of reason.

Whereas Murti postulates the Buddha's silence to be the result of his finding fault in the actual *content* of the fourteen undeclared views, Nagao claims that his silence must be seen as a statement of the inadequacy of the *medium* of expression, that is, language. "The inadequacy of language must be regarded as an important key in the understanding of the fourteen unanswered questions and also that of the Buddha's silence before his initial preaching." 13

There is merit to both of these interpretations, but they are lacking in a very crucial way. If the Buddha's silence has to do with the speculative nature of the fourteen views, why did he

remain silent in the case of these fourteen and yet offer answers to other more overtly metaphysical questions? If, as Murti claims, "to have given a 'yes' or 'no' answer would have made him [the Buddha] guilty of dogmatism," 14 why did the Buddha on other occassions answer these questions, positing these answers as truths of Buddhism? The same can be asked of Nagao's interpretation. If the Buddha considered language in general to be inadequate (a) why did he teach through the medium of language for almost fifty years, and (b) why did he choose the occassion of these fourteen questions to express its inadequacy?

The structural and contextual scrutiny of these questions is, I believe, at the very core of the problem, and yet this has been consistently overlooked by Western scholars in the treatment of this issue. We shall see in what follows that the dGe lugs pas have a great deal to say in this regard. In the dGe lugs pa exegesis on the Abhisamayalamkara* it becomes clear that neither skepticism concerning the content of the views nor the view that the medium of expression, language, is limited are to be considered motivating forces behind the Buddha's silence. Instead, it will become evident that silence in these instances is considered an enlightened response to very specific situationssituations in which the Buddha must take into account the mental attitude and philosophical presuppositions of the questioner. Then, turning to the exegesis on the Mulamadhyamakakarika*, we shall explore an approach that grants some importance to the content but that still puts great emphasis on the nature of the questioner. By focusing on the context of the question, rather than on the content or the medium, the dGe lugs pa approach has the advantage of adressing the question posed previously, namely, why the Buddha chose to remain silent on the occassion of these fourteen questions when at other times he expatiated quite liberally on them.

II. Two Interpretations of Silence

The fourteen points on which the Buddha did not express an opinion are as follows:

1. Does the world have an end?

2. Does it not have an end?

3. Does it both have an end and not have an end?

4. Does it neither have an end nor not have an end?

Likewise, there are four similar possibilities corresponding to the question," Is the world permanent?" and four corresponding to the question,"Does the Tathagata * exist after death?" The final two questions are "Is this life the body?" and "Is this life one thing and the body another?" 15 When asked these questions the Buddha offered no response; he "declared" no opinion.

On first inspection, one of the most striking aspects of the fourteen views is the fact that, at least in the case of the first twelve, they are arranged in terms of the four alternatives or extremes, sometimes called the *tetralemma* (*catuskoti, mtha' bzhi*). This logical structure is, of course, quite well known as one of Nagarjuna's* chief dialectical tools. Is it a coincidence that these undeclared views are arranged in a catuskoti* framework? If not, what relation is there between the four extremes that the Buddha left undeclared and the four extremes that, in a Madhyamaka context, become the basis of the critique of essentialism?

In general, we can glean from the sources two views on this question. The first answer is to be found in the context of the exegesis to the fourth chapter of the Abhisamayalamkara*. It considers the content of the questions minimally important16 and the catuskoti* framework nothing more than an expedient way of enumerating different views prevalent among heterodox philosophers of the time. In this interpretation, because the lesson to be learned from the Buddha's silence has little to do with the content of the views, the tetralemma is at most a useful framework for ennumerating a variety of disparate opinions prevalent at the time.

According to this first approach, then, the reason for the Buddha's silence in regard to these fourteen points is unrelated to the Madhyamaka catuskoti* critique. Instead, the Buddha's silence in the face of the fourteen questions is to be interpreted as a case of skillful means, whereby the Buddha, through his

omniscience, realizes the extreme delusion of the questioner and, determining that the most beneficial course would be to remain silent, leaves the questions unanswered. Here, of course, the implications of the Buddha's silence for ineffability are minimal. The Buddha, it is asserted, refrained from declaring an opinion in regard to these questions not because they are in principle unanswerable, that is, not because their subject matter is ineffable, but because, pedagogically speaking, it was the most spiritually beneficial action he could have taken on the questioner's behalf.

The second interpretation is based on Madhyamaka exegetical literature dealing with the fourteen undeclared views. It claims that it is no coincidence that the undeclared views are expressed in the format of the four extremes. Just as the four extremes serve as the focus of the Madhyamaka critique, so too must the Buddha's silence in this case be interpreted as an implicit repudiation of essentialism. Here, the reason for the silence is not primarily pedagogical: it has little to do with the presuppositions of the questioner. Instead, the very questions are seen to contain views that are *in and of themselves,* apart from who posits them, fault ridden. Taking this approach, the implications of the Buddha's silence to the question of ineffability are enormous, for if the Buddha's action is more than a singular case of skill in means, it must be a finger pointing to a more general characteristic of phenomena.

III. The Enumeration of the Fourteen Undeclared Points

Before discussing these two approaches in greater detail let us examine the enumeration of the fourteen views as they occur in our two different sources, the Abhisamayalamkara * (AA) and the Mulamadhyamakakarika*. The subject of the fourteen undeclared points occurs within the AA as part of a more general discussion of the sixty-two wrong views (*kudrsti lta ba ngan pa*).17 In general the sixty-two are condensed into six major categories.

1. Causal: referring to an incorrect view of the self.

2. Preliminary: heating or teaching doctrines that are lowly.

3. Basic: relating to the teachings and to logic.

4. Temporal: conceptions in terms of an anterior extreme (perceiving the past) and conceptions in terms of a posterior extreme (perceiving the future). 18

5. Relating to views: the views of eternalism and nihilism, and those related to nirvana*.

6. Birthplace: explanations relating to birth in the different absorptions etc.

The Mulamadhyamakakarika*, it is claimed, subsumes these sixty-two into two groups of eight subcategories: "eight views related to a previous extreme and eight views related to a later extreme.19 " These are expressed in a catuskoti* framework that deals with the four main theses:

1-4. The self's existence in the past

5-8. The world's permanence

9-12. The self's existence in the future

13-16. The world's having an end20

Again, there is the division into the fourteen undeclared views listed previously. In MMK (XXV,21) we find these grouped into a series of four:

1-4. Related to the anterior extreme

5-8. Related to the posterior extreme

9-12.Related to nirvana*

13-14. Related to the body and life21

These can be otherwise expressed' as the four extreme views of each of the following subjects:

1-4. The self and the world as (truly) permanent (anterior extreme)

5-8. The self and the world as (truly) having an end (posterior extreme)

9-12. The liberated being's existence after death

13-14. The body and life as (truly) different substances or as (truly) the same substance 22

Whereas our original listing organized these fourteen according to the subject of the view (that is, according to whether the self, the world, etc., was being considered) this latter classification stresses the predicate ("permanence," "having an end," etc.) and groups them (at least 1-8) according to the predicate, making combinations of multiple subjects to this end. Be that as it may, it is clear from the preceding discussion that a number of classification schemes are found in the tradition. Each stresses something different.

IV. The Interpretation of the Abhisamayalamkara* Exegetical Literature

We have mentioned that the exegetical literature on the Abhisamayalamkara* is more inclined to see the undeclared views as a case in point of the Buddha's skill in means, even as proof of his omniscience, rather than as an instance of ineffability. His silence in this case is seen as proof of the fact that he understood the predispositions of the questioner and hence of the fact that his knowledge is privy to all things. dGe lugs pa exegesis on the Abhisamayalamkara*, therefore, places more emphasis on the predispositions and views of the questioner than on the nature of the questions themselves. Moreover, the fact that the fourteen views are expressed in a catuskoti* framework is of minimal importance. Here, instead of seeing within this framework the basis for a critique in which "all conceptually imaginable positions are exhausted,"23 the catuskoti comes simply to be considered an expedient and systematic way of listing certain heterodox views. Hence, the division into not x, not not-x, not both, and not neither is not seen as an organic whole leading to a single gestalt of the ultimate nature of some phenomenon. Instead, they are to be taken individually as expressing the distinct views of different non-Buddhist schools.

rJe btsun pa, for example, classifies the fourteen points as follows (the enumeration corresponds to the last one on pp. 180-181):

1,6,9. Samkhya * (flighty = positivist)

2,5,10. Carvaka* (condensed = negativist)

3,7,11. Jain (scattered = both)

4,8,12. Vatsiputriya* (contracted = neither)

13. Vaisesika*

14. Samkhya*24

Why was no response given to these questions? Why were they left undeclared? rJe btsun pa states:

> An answer is not declared because were [the Buddha to have answered] it would have required his having answered them via an explanation of the selflessness of the person, whereas those who ask these questions are not fit vessels for the teachings on the selflessness of the person.25

These questions, he says, presuppose the existence of a self of the person and to prove that someone who holds these views is not a suitable recipient for the teachings of selflessness he cites a variety of scriptural sources, like the following passage from Nagarjuna's* Ratnavali*:

> When asked if the world had an end
> The Conqueror remained without speaking.
> Because he did not speak to that being
> Who was not a fit vessel for such a profound doctrine,
> For that reason the wise
> Should know him to be all-knowing, that is, omniscient.26

To sum up, according to the exegesis on AA, faulty presuppositions on the part of the questioner may indeed have motivated the Buddha to have remained silent in the face of his interlocutor, but the *real* lesson to be learned from the Buddha's silence concerns neither the views (which in several cases are actual truths of Buddhism) nor the faulty presuppositions on which they are based. The *real* lesson concerns the Buddha's omniscience and his skill in means.

To emphasize this point, rJe btsun pa offers the following argument. He claims that the actual phrasing of the second undeclared view (just to take one example) must be "*truly* viewing the self and the world to be impermanent." To omit the qualifier *truly,* he states, is to make this view, not an undeclared one, but a truth of Buddhism. 27 He says: "The view that the self and the world are impermanent is not an undeclared view, because it is a *correct* view. Why? It is because the self and the world *are* impermanent!"28 This one passage tells us a great deal about the dGe lugs pa interpretation of the undeclared views, of the Buddha's silence, and of their stance concerning ineffability in general. In other interpretations that omit the qualifier *truly*, it is the claim of the "impermanence of the self and of the world" that is seen to be faulty. Such a view is perceived to be in and of itself unworthy of the Buddha's comments. What is more, because this view is held by Buddhists themselves, the silence of the Buddha, they would claim, holds as much of a message for Buddhists as it does for non-Buddhists. The message is a challenge to commonly held Buddhist "clichés" such as impermanence.

The dGe lugs pa view, of which rJe btsun pa is representative, repudiates this interpretation. Here, only the undeclared points *as seen through the eyes of a non-Buddhist* are to be repudiated. The qualifier *truly* serves the purpose of identifying the view as non-Madhyamaka, and of distinguishing this undeclared view from the innocuous Buddhist truths concerning the impermanence of the self and world, truths the Buddha declared time and again. We see then that the qualifier *truly* is utilized, to a great extent, to deemphasize *the content* of the fourteen points and to emphasize *the act* of silence (and its implications to the Buddha's omniscience). Put in another way, the use of the qualifier shifts the focus from *what is being asked* in the questions to *who is doing the asking.* The silence then is not a challenge to the Buddhist position that the world is impermanent. It is instead the repudiation of a *truly* impermanent world (as held by the non-Buddhist), and though there is an implicit lesson here for the Buddhist (namely, that nothing truly exists and that one should avoid such views), the explicit and most important lesson, says rJe btsun pa, is to be learned from

the very act of silence, for in his silence the Buddha was demonstrating his omniscience.

V. The Madhyamaka Interpretation

Tsong kha pa, in his treatment of the acyakrtavastus * in the *rTsa shesz* tik* *chen*, commenting on Chapter 27 of the Mulamadhyamakakarika*, does ascribe some of the undeclared views to the non-Buddhists, but he makes it clear that they are not *exclusively*, heterodox views.29 Here, within a strictly Madhyamaka context, it is not primarily the lesson in omniscience that is stressed but the faulty nature of the views themselves and their elimination through the understanding of interdependence.30

The views are considered faulty because they presuppose the inherent existence of their subject matter. In the *rTsa shes* tik* *chen* Tsong kha pa says:

> The operations of these views do not correspond to their object. Perceiving the self as its subject matter, to claim that "in the past its aspect was such and such" is to grasp the nature of that into which it had been transformed as existing or arising inherently.31

Hence, predicating a particular quality of subject matter that has been incorrectly perceived causes the predicated quality to be misperceived as well. It is clear, however, that the dGe lugs pas, even within the context of Madhyamaka exegesis, do not see the Buddha's silence on the question of the impermanence of the world, for example, as a critique of the position itself, but rather as a critique of the pedagogical efficacy of predication in the case of those whose minds are deluded by ignorance in regard to the subject. For this reason Tsong kha pa too must qualify this as a critique, not simply of "viewing the world to be impermanent" but of "viewing the world to be *inherently* impermanent." He says that "to perceive the anterior extreme, to *inherently* view the world as being impermanent, is not correct."32 Likewise, he qualifies other faulty views with such words as *naturally* (*ngo nos*, *ngo bor*).33 Here, such qualifiers as *inher-*

ently and *naturally* ensure that what the Buddha is repudiating by his silence is not a Buddhist truth (such as the impermanence of the world), but such truths *viewed in a faulty way*, that is, viewed through the filter of ignorance. It ensures that the Buddha's silence is interpreted not as a statement of the ineffability of phenomena in general, that is, not as a claim that impermanence cannot be predicated of the world, but as a statement of the fact that it is futile to expound upon the nature of phenomena when they are misperceived. To predicate anything of a subject that is misapprehended and to proliferate discursively on it is considered useless. Here he follows Candrakirti *34 by giving the following example. He says, "Because the son of a barren woman is not perceived, the darkness [of his skin] is not perceived."35 This example implies that, when a particular subject is misperceived as truly existent and therefore does not exist as it appears, like the son of a barren woman, it makes no sense (either semantically or pragmatically; that is, pedagogically) to predicate anything of itto qualify it in any way.

This question is treated in quite some detail by David Seyfort Ruegg in his discussion of the fourth extreme of the catuskoti.* He states that the

> use of the "neither... nor" type of statement is held to be appropriate because it is applied when speaking of a subject that is empty (null) like the son of a barren woman (vandhyasuta*), so long as the particular disciples addressed have only partially understood the non-substantiality of all *dharmas.* (We would say that a sentence containing such an empty subject is not well-formed semantically and that any qualification is therefore inapplicable).36

As earlier, the claim seems to be that because the party asking the question does not understand the reality, that is, the emptiness, of the subject, or what is worse misunderstands it, actively misapprehending the subject to exist in a way that it does not exist, the Buddha declined to answer. In other words, because the subject of the question or thesis (*the world* in "does the world have an end," for example,) is misapprehended by the questioner as being truly or inherently existent, it is a substan-

tive without a referent (like "the son of a barren woman"), and hence nothing can meaningfully be predicated of it (e.g., "having an end," "having no end," etc.). Ruegg bases this interpretation on Candrakirti's * comments in the Prasannapada's* explanation of MMK (XVIII,8). Candrakirti* states: "As in the case of the negation of the paleness and darkness of the son of a barren woman so both [x and not-x] are negated here."37

Whether in the context of the avyakrtavastus* or of the fourth position of the catuskoti*, however, the interpretation of the Buddha's silence in the Madhyamaka context is the same. The silence of the Buddha, and the repudiation of the fourth koti*, is perceived as a response to the misapprehension of the subject and is not considered a claim as to the ineffability of such a position in general. What is more, unlike the approach of the Abhisamayalamkara*, this misapprehension is viewed as something from which both Buddhists and non-Buddhists suffer. Hence, in the Madhyamaka exegetical literature the silence of the Buddha has more of a moral than merely the Buddha's omniscience. A point as to the nature of phenomena is being made.

V. Conclusion

In the Buddhist tradition claims as to the ineffability of key concepts and insights are plentiful. At the same time we have witnessed how in a variety of contexts (the Tibetan dGe lugs pa interpretation and the Indian exegesis on the Abhisamayalamkara* and Mulamadhyamakakarika*) the tradition goes out of its way to demonstrate that such claims are not to be interpreted as implying the inappropriateness of philosophical discourse, much less of discourse in general. By contextualizing the silence of the Buddha in this way, it comes to be interpreted either as a singular case of his skill in means or else as a claim concerning the limits of predication in the case where misapprehension of the subject occurs. In no case is the Buddha's silence viewed as supporting the claims of radical ineffability, that predication (either of philosophical categories or in general) is impossible.

Given the fact that dGe lugs pa exegesis, perhaps the epitome of Buddhist scholasticism, has been adamant about preserving the functions of language, it is not surprising that it should take the stance that it does in regard to the undeclared views. We have already seen that in a variety of contexts the dGe lugs pas have been univocal in their defense of language, inference, and conceptual thought. In the present case, their repudiation of radical ineffability as a valid interpretation of the Buddha's silence is but another manifestation of this same ideal.

Chapter 10
Conclusion

This study began with the suggestion that scholasticism is a useful category in the cross-cultural study of religio-philosophical traditions. Chapter One argued for this thesis by developing a notion of scholasticism as an abstract and decontextualized category, exploring a series of family resemblances: traits that, although not essential to all forms of scholasticism, may nonetheless be central to many. It is, however, impossible to establish scholasticism as a useful comparative category strictly at the level of theory. As with religion, scripture, and other now accepted *topoi* in the comparative study of religion, scholasticism will find its niche as a comparative category only when the secondary discourse that constitutes its theoretical elucidation confronts actual historical traditions. Taking a pragmatic stance on these questions, I believe that it is precisely its usefulness to scholars working with these traditionssuggesting new questions and providing different perspectives on old onesthat constitutes its validity as a conceptual category. In my own case, the process of rethinking Indo-Tibetan Buddhist philosophy through the filter of scholasticism has permitted me to see a certain conherence and continuity to texts, figures, philosophical positions, and historical movements that would have been impossible otherwise. It has given me an organic and holistic framework in which to analyze phenomena that might otherwise have seemed unrelated.

In the body of this work I have attempted to show how some of the traits of scholasticism disscussed in Chapter One

play themselves out in the Indo-Tibetan Buddhist philosophical tradition. It behooves us now to recapitualte some of the previous discussion in an attempt to show more specifically how the texts, figures and schools examined in the previous chapters are in some significant way "scholastic."

I. The Reconciliation of Reason and Experience

Jean Leclerq has shown that medieval Christian monastics were often skeptical of scholastic rationalism, for the emphasis on reason could always lead to the possibility of devaluing the inner spiritual life. 1 In China, too, the dialectical methods of the logicians were viewed in a negative light because of their lack of relevance to the practical life. This type of skepticism has undoubtedly led some "theologians," both ancient and modern, to a rejection of reason. It was my contention in Chapter One, however, that rather than reject reason, scholastics opt for vouch-sating the place of experience or action, attempting to reconcile the rational and experiential dimensions of religion.

In the Indo-Tibetan case this reconciliation occurs in various ways. The Dharma, that is, doctrine, is said to have two aspects: one that is linguistic and one that is experiential. Doctrine as expressed in language is the source of rational, conceptual reflection. Doctrine as spiritual realization represents the experiential dimension. These two aspects of doctrine are related causally. Doctrine in its rational, linguistic aspect leads to inner realization, that is, to doctrine in its internalized, experiential form. What is more, both of these aspects of doctrine are, from the scholastic perspective, essential to the Buddhist path. The rational understanding of the linguistic aspect of the Dharma ensures the soteriological validity of the subsequent experience. The prior rational understanding of doctrine guarantees the authentically Buddhist character of the experience. However, if an understanding of the linguistic aspect of the Dharma is essential, so, too, is its experiential dimension, for the latter is the true liberative force. The link between reason and experience thus becomes a causal one: data are gathered through "hearing" the doctrine, its rational analysis leads to certainty, and that certainty

is boiled on the fires of meditation, leading eventually to direct, nonconceptual insight. It is in this way that the reconciliation of reason and experience is effectuated in the Indian and Tibetan sources.

II. The Reconciliation of Reason and Scripture

George Makdisi identifies as the "inner spirit, the basic characteristic" of medieval European scholasticism "a deep and equal concern for both authority [as represented by scripture and tradition] and reason, engaging scholastics over a long period of time in an endeavor to effect a harmony between the two." 2 For Buddhist scholastics this harmony is in part effectuated by allowing scripture and reason to mutually illuminate each other. Scripture serves as a source for rational analysis. In this sense, scripture delimits rationality by giving it a focus; that is, by providing for the intellect the most worthwhile subject of analytical reflection, worth-while by virtue of its soteriological power. However, if scripture delimits reason, so, too, does reason delimit scripture. In Chapter Two we witnessed how scholastic rationality turned to scripture as a category to elucidate its nature, and in Chapter Four we saw reason at work in solving certain problems concerning exegesis, the art of scriptural commentary. Chapter Three discussed how reason is used to reconcile scriptural inconsistency and how it becomes the ultimate hermeneutical criterion, determining what constitutes the Buddha's ultimate, definitive purport. In Chapter Five we saw how the authority of scripture comes to be epistemically curtailed and how scripture as a source of knowledge comes to be almost completely subsumed under inferential reasoning. In short, scripture illuminates reason by providing it with material worthy of reflection, and reason illuminates scripture by elucidating its nature, its ultimate meaning, the process that constitutes its exegesis, and the limits of its authority. This reconciliation of scripture and reason, however, does not yield a parity between the two elements. In the dGe lugs pa synthesis it is reason that is ultimately triumphant. It is the final arbiter of scriptural meaning and the chief epistemic source of the vast bulk of doctrinal truths.

III. The Basic Intelligibility of the Universe

For the dGe lugs pa scholastics, in principle no fact is beyond human understanding. This is for them a corrollary to the doctrine of omniscience. The fact that every being has the innate ability to become omniscient, to know every past, present, and future fact, implies that the universe, in both its conventional and ultimate aspects, is knowable; for how else can total knowledge be achieved if not through the incremental process that provides the adept with a gradual access to conventional and ultimate reality? Omniscience then is but the result of a gradual program of knowing things. If even one phenomenon were beyond the range of human understanding, it would make that thing beyond the range of the omniscient mind, impossible by definition. Hence, the universe is epistemologically accessible in its entirety. Evident facts are accessbile through sense perception, more abstruse facts are accessible through inference, and extremely abstruse facts are accessible through scripture (though in this latter case we saw an attempt to make of the use of scripture simply another case of inference).

The fact that knowledge is essential to enlightenment leads Buddhist scholastics to epistemological speculation. Such speculation is perhaps most evident in Chapter Six, where we discussed the dGe lugs pa theory of the two pramanas * or sources of knowledge and the complimentarity of sense perception and conceptual thought qua inference. Those scholastics who are committed to the epistemological accessibility of the world must demonstrate how the different forms of knowledge operate, that is, how conventional and ultimate truths are to be accessed. They must also, however, repudiate the claim that certain facts are *inaccessible*, undeterminable and unknowable, a claim found with some frequency in the Buddhist canon itself. The critique of radical ineffability was of course the subject of Chapter Nine. Here we see dGe lugs pa exegetical acumen at its high point, as they seek to interpret the doctrine of ineffability in such a way that it poses no threat to the epistemological accessibility of the world. Hence, the dGe lugs pas argue for the knowability of things both positively, by putting forth a systematic and defensible

theory of the workings of knowledge, and negatively, by arguing against the claim that anything is beyond human knowledge.

IV. Methodological Self-Reflection

Buddhist scholastics, as we have seen, are often more concerned with metaquestions than with first-order ones. True, they feel compelled to rely on scripture, but they feel equally compelled to investigate the nature of scripture. Exegesis is essential to their enterprise, but they are as interested in the theoretical problems that arise in regard to the process of commentary as they are in that very process as a practice. Inconsistency in the canon takes them far beyond what would practically be required to solve these problems, leading them to elaborate hermeneutical theories that require distinctions between kinds of truth and levels of meaning. Unwilling to accept the authority of scripture at face value, their commitment to rationalism compels them to turn self-critically to the issue of the epistemic power of scriptural knowledge, the outcome of which is to radically curtail the role that scripture can play in the proof of doctrine.

This methodological self-reflection, however, goes beyond issues related to scripture. Indo-Tibetan Buddhist scholastics are obviously committed to the use of inferential reasoning, but they are equally committed to the resolution of theoretical problems regarding inference: its function, its limits, and its relationship to sense perception. This second-order analysis leads from the mere use of syllogistic reasoning to the development of logic and, as we saw in Chapter Seven, to subsequent metaquestions regarding the logical structure of inferential knowledge. In brief, this tendency to abstraction in the sense of objectification leads Buddhist scholastics to self-critical theorizing at almost every turn. The tendency is evident throughout most of this study.

V. The Role of Language

Language is important for dGe lugs pa scholastics in all of the three ways mentioned in Chapter One. Language as scripture serves as the source material for a great deal of scholastic specu-

lation, as we have seen, delimiting the scope of philosophical analysis. Language as scripture focuses Buddhist scholastic inquiry on those questions considered soteriologically relevant, in this way setting the boundaries for what is to be considered worthwhile (*lege* orthodox) discourse. However, language is not only the canvas, it is also the paint. Besides being the source for scholastic speculation, language is also the medium in which such speculation takes place. Both the exegesis of the Buddhist canon and scholastic discourse generally occur in the medium of language. Finally, there are instances in which language in general becomes the object of scholastic inquiry. We find this, for example, in the Buddhist scholastic defense of the communicative ability of language (and its psychological mirror image, conceptual thought) by means of the theory of meaning and linguistic understanding known as *apoha*. Language also becomes an object of inquiry in the Yogacara * analysis of the weakness of linguistic reference, and in the Madhyamaka claim that phenomena exist as "mere imputations by name and thought," their brand of nominalism. Scriptural language as source, exegesis and philosophical discourse as medium, and language generally as object of reflection: it is in these three ways that language functions in Buddhist scholasticism.

These are some of the issues explored in the present study, a work that attempts to look at Indo-Tibetan Buddhist philosophy through the lens of "scholasticism." To the extent that it presents us with new perspectives on this traditionnew questions, new answers, new connectionsscholasticism is useful as a category. Whether or not scholasticism emerges as a useful theoretical tool in a more general, cross-cultural way will depend on whether scholars working with other traditions find it equally illuminating.

Future Directions

In Chapter One we saw how scholars of medieval European thought effectuated a partial decontextualization of the category "scholasticism," one that allowed for inclusion of Christian, Jew-

ish, and Islamic philosophical speculation into the whole that is medieval European scholasticism. This, the reader will recall, took place in one of two ways: through the identification of similarities in philosophical content (the approach of de Wulf), and through the identification of similarities in method (the approach of Grabmann, Knowles, and others). The first of these two approaches has been criticized by those who ascribe to the second, the gist of their argument being that what constitutes similarity in content, when subjected to more detailed scrutiny, is found to be either illusory or trivial. Suppose, however, that we forego the goal of finding universal similarity in content, that is, similarity of doctrinal content in every movement we wish to classify as scholastic. Is the more modest goal of examining *local* similarities in the content of scholastic philosophical speculation one possible direction for future research? The question, it seems to me, must clearly be answered in the affirmative. It may be, for example, that not all scholastic traditions are concerned with the issue of the ontological status of universals or with the relationship of substance and attribute. It may be that not all scholastic philosophers have formulated principles for what constitutes valid reasoning or theories of linguistic reference, but some traditions, even some that are quite geographically and culturally removed from one another, have clearly done so. The point, of course, is that we should not be too quick to dismiss as fruitful comparative scholastic studies that stress similarities in content. 3 Foregoing, therefore, *universal* similarity in content does allow for the fruitful exploration of such similarity *locally*, and this is certainly one possible direction for future research.

This being said, it seems clear to me that the more interesting area of future investigation is one that explores the similarities (or the differences within similarities) found in the *methods* employed by various scholastic traditions. Some of these I have already alluded to in the body of this study. They include a comparative taxonomy of scholastic literary genres, the study of the rhetoric of scholastic polemics, and the comparative investigation of the use of scripture and syllogistic reasoning in scho-

lastic philosophy. All of these remain unexplored areas of comparative research. However, before work of this kind can be undertaken it will be necessary for scholars of various traditions to turn their attention to the question of what constitutes scholasticism in their own cultural and religious area of expertise.

Up to this point we have been dealing with the phenomenon of scholasticism as if its global scope and range were clearly defined. In fact, the question of what periods in what historical traditions can be considered scholastic is far from clear. What traditions and subtraditions in China, for example, might be classified as scholastic? The philosophy of neo-Confucianists like Chu hsi, for example, evinces a "scholastic"-like concern for "scripture" and its exegesis, but is less concerned with logic. Logicians like Hui Shih and Kung-sun Lung, on the other hand, share with medieval European and Buddhist scholastics a profound concern for rational argumentation, but seem much less concerned with systematicity, tradition, and the practical-experiential implications of their doctrines. The later Mohists, who "share with the Greeks the faith that all of their questions can be settled by reason," and with many Indian scholastics the felt need to "establish the teachings of [their founder] on impregnable foundations," 4 are in many ways closer to the scholastic philosophers that are the object of the present study. However, no one tradition, whether European or Tibetan, can act as the standard against which another tradition's scholastic character is to be assessed. Hence, the question for sinologists may be not only "What Chinese philosophical schools are scholastic?" but also "How will the traits of scholasticism as a category have to be modified in light of the Chinese evidence?"

I claimed early on in the present work that scholasticism was an intellectual movement found (the implication was, found *only*) in literate cultures. I bring this issue up once again only to state that I remain open to the possibility of being proved wrong in this regard. Not very long ago it was believed that philosophy itself was to be found only in chirographic cultures, but today. African traditional philosophy, to name just one example, is an accepted area of study within the Western academy5 Though unlikely, it seems to me, it would be interesting if a

similar case could be made for the existence of African traditional scholasticism.

When asked in its most general form, the question of the scope of scholasticism becomes one of identifying those historical traditions and subtraditions that, at least tentatively, might profit from being viewed through such a lens. This we might call the *inter*-tradition question of scope. There is, however, an *intra*-tradition version of such a question. How do we determine the extent and limits of scholasticism within a single religious tradition or cultural context? Phrased in this way, the issue becomes tantamount to the question of the origin and terminus of, say, Buddhist scholasticism in the larger context of Indian Buddhism. The problem is far from trivial, for, as Giuseppe Mazzotta rightly observes, "the convention of partitioning history according to distinguishable and discrete intellectual periods has not gone unchallenged in recent times." 6 We have seen that the question of origins is a subject of considerable interest to European medievalists, and the question is one that can be raised of Indian Buddhism as well.7 From what point in history do we date Indian Buddhist scholasticism? We find a full blown scholastic method operative in the works of Bhavaviveka* (500-570 c.e.) and Candrakirti* (600-650 C.E.), and, it can be argued, even in the works Asanga* (fourth century C.E.) and his brother Vasubandhu, but what of Nagarjuna* (second century C.E.) and the early Abhidharmists? Although the naive question of historical origins can certainly be posed in the Indian case, it seems to me that research into this issue will not give rise to very interesting results. The temporal identification of origins is of course intimately related to the issue of definition. When no essentialist definition of scholasticism is possible, no clear-cut origin or terminus will be identifiable. What we can say, however, is that texts and movements before the second century C.E. share fewer of the traits described earlier. At best, they are distant cousins in the family of figures, texts, and movements we call *scholastic.*

Far more interesting, it seems to me, are other kinds of historical questions: What social, cultural, religious, and political factors aid in the rise of scholasticism, and what factors im-

pede it? What makes scholasticism flourish and what causes it to decline? 8 What can we say about the sociology of scholastic institutionsthe great universities, monasteries, and academiesin different cultures? What might comparative study of the curricula, liturgy, and economics of these educational institutions yield by way of results? What relationship do scholastic institutions have to political ones? These questions are for the most part quite different from the ones I have considered in the present study, which is more philosophical than historical in its emphasis. Nonetheless, research of the kind I have just suggested is essential if our goal is a more complete picture of even one tradition, much less of scholasticism in general.

Passing now from suggesting very broad questions, let me conclude by suggesting a very specific area of research, one that I think clearly illustrates the comparative method at work. My reading in the area of medieval European scholasticism led me to the work of Erwin Panofsky, whose *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism*, published in 1957, has received a great deal of attention even in the most recent work in the field of medieval studies. Panofsky's basic thesis is that scholasticism as an intellectual movement, and especially its "modus operandi," what we have referred to as the method (as opposed to content) previously, is reflected in the character of gothic architecture. This hypothesis is not uncontroversial, but whether or not it is true in a European context, it seems to me that a Tibetan version of the same thesis is defensible. Anyone who has visited one of the three great monastic universities (*gden sa*) of the dGe lugs pa school in Tibet cannot help but notice the rambling, proliferative style of the temples and dormitories, with sections and sub-sections that are not unlike the divisions *(za bcad)* found in Tibetan scholastic textbooks. A case could also be made for the fact that the architecture of the major temples reflects the structure of the curriculum of study. This is not, of course, the place to develop these ideas. I bring it up only to indicate a circumscribed area of research, the fruit of comparative analysis, that I believe could prove interesting.

This list of suggestions for future research, though indicative of the various directions in which future research might

lead, is not of course meant to be exhaustive. As mentioned, being a pragmatist, I am of the opinion that neither a theory of scholasticism nor suggestions for research constitute a defense of its validity as a category. Only its usefulness in the actual elucidation of the dynamics of particular traditions will accomplish this. If this is to occur, however, the present work must end, thereby allowing others the opportunity to speak. In the words of M. M. Bakhtin:

> The boundaries of each concrete utterance as a unit of speech communication are determined by a *change of speaking subjects*, that is, a change of speakers. Any utterance... has, so to speak, an absolute beginning and an absolute end: its beginning is preceded by the utterances of others, and its end is followed by the responsive utterances of others... 9

This work has benefited from the "utterances" of many others, both ancient and modern; and it closes now with the hope that among the rejoinders that its end makes possible there will be found the response of other comparativists who, like myself, revel in the complexities of the scholastic mind.

ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Abhisamayalamkara *
AK	Vasubandhu, Abhidharmakosa*
AKB	Vasubandhu, Abhidharmakosabhasya*
BCA	Santideva*, Bodhicaryavatara*
D	sDe dge ed. of Tibetan Buddhist Canon
DE	Cabezón, *A Dose of Emptiness*
EE	Thurman, *Essence of True Eloquence*
IB	Nakamura, *Indian Buddhism*
IBK	*Indogaku* Bukkyogaku* Kenkyu*
LSN	Tsong kha pa, *Legs bshad shying po*
LSSP	Tsong kha pa, *Legs bshad gser phreng*
MMK	Nagarjuna*, Mulamadhyamakakarika*
MOE	Hopkins, *Meditation on Emptiness*
NGRG	Dharmakirti*, *rNam 'grel le'u dang po'i rang 'grel*
NGTC	mKhas grub rje, rNam 'grel tik* chen
NSNG	rGyal tshab rje, *rNam bshad shying po'i rgyan*
P	Peking ed. of Tibetan Buddhist Canon
PD	Se ra rJe btsun pa, *Khabs dang po'i spyi don*
PDIV	Se ra rJe btsun pa, *Khabs bzhi pa'i spyi don*
PV	Dharmakirti*, Pramanavarttika*
PVSv	Dharmakirti*, Pramanavarttikasvavrtti*
TKN	mKhas grub rje, *rTog dka'i snang ba*
TLSB	rGyal tshab rje, *rNam 'grel thar lam gsal byed*
Toh.	Tohoku catalogue of the Tibetan Canon (see Ui et al.)

TSTC	Tsong kha pa, *rTsa shes* tik * *chen*
TTC	mKhas grub rje, *sTong thun chen mo*
UT	*Uttaratantra*

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NOTES

Introduction

1. A position expressed by John Lotz in his influential essay, "Linguistics: Symbols Make Man," in S. Saporta, ed., *Psycholinguistics* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961): "Human existence is welded to language. No normal person is without this faculty and no other species is known to possess it.... Once acquired, language becomes a constant companion to all human behavior," (p. 1). A similar position has been enunciated by David Crystal when he defined linguistics in his *Linguistics, Language and Religion* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1965): "Language has a multiplicity of purposes, a multitude of social functions, and linguistics studies them all. But in particular, linguistics studies language as an end in itself, as an aspect of human behavior which no other animal possesses" (p. 8). Semioticians have claimed this essential relationship between *signs* and "human sciences," "the cultural life of human beings," or "the nature of human consciousness"; see Charles Morris, *Foundations of the Theory of Signs* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1938); Umberto Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976), p. 46; L. S. Vygotsky, *Thought and Language*, ed. and trans. E. Hanfmann (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1962), p. 153. More classical authors were also want to speculate about language. Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464) claimed in his *Compendium* that language originates with the first man, Adam; see Anne Fremantle, *A Primer of Linguistics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1974). Nor has the claim that language is an essentially human faculty been restricted to the West. In one ancient Indian philosophical text, the Chandogya * Upanisad* (I,2), we find the claim "the essence of a person is speech" (*purusasya* vag* rasah*). See also G. Dumezil on vac* in *Appollon sonore et autres essais* (Paris: Gallimard, 1982).

2. Edition and translation of W. Welliver, *Dante in Hell: The "De Vulgaris Eloquentia"* (Ravenna: Longo Editore, n.d.), pp. 44-45: "*nam eorum que sunt omnium soli homini datum est loqui, cum solum sibi necessarium fuerit. Non angelis, non inferioribus animalibus necessarium fuit loqui, sed nequicquam datum fuisset eis: quod nempe facere natura aborret."*

3. I am not trying to argue here for the fact that "sacred persistence," or what might be its analogue, "linguistic persistence," is sufficient to define *humankind* (i.e., as religious, language speaking beings). Such a view has, it seems to me, been eloquently criticized by Jonathan Z. Smith in "Sacred Persistence: Toward a Redescription of Canon," in *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 36-52. In any case, whether or not religion or language is *essential* to human experience, both are nonetheless extremely important to much of it.

4. Some of the earliest known human speculation about language is of course to be found in religious texts. The Vedic deification of speech (vac *,) the later Upanisadic texts' (e.g., Chandogya* (I,2)) claim that the essence of speech is the religious ritual passages recited during sacrifice (vaca* rg* rasah.*), the theory in Genesis 11.1-9 concerning the origin of language and God's role in the diversification of language, Plato's *Cratylus,* in which the possibly divine origin of human speech is discussed, and the elusive dual nature (partaking as it does of both transcendent and mundane linguistic characteristics) of the term *logos* in both Greek and early Christian thought are all examples of this phenomenon. For a survey of other theories concerning the divine origins of language (at least in a Western setting), see David Crystal, *Linguistics, Language and Rehligion,* p. 29.

5. For a brief, but geographically diverse, overview of the sacral functions (and indeed of the very sacrality) of language in different religious traditions, see Wade T. Wheelock's article, "Sacred Language" under the entry "Language" in the *Encyclopedia of Religion,* ed. M. Eliade (New York: Macmillan, 1985), pp. 439-446.

6. For an overview of some questions relating to language in a Buddhist context, see Luis O. Gómez, "Buddhist Views of Language," the entry following Wheelock's (see previous note), and its bibliography.

7. There are several instances in the Pali Nikayas* where the Buddha is portrayed as treating the subject of language, whether directly or indirectly. For example, he is said to reject the fact that the doctrine requires a specialized language, instructing his disciples to preach the *Dharma* in the vernacular. The topic of ineffability arises in the context of the "unanswered questions" (avyakrta* *vastu*). The sixty-two views (see Chapter Nine) are first discussed in

the Brahmajala * *Sutta* of the Digha* Nikaya*. We even find some references in the Pali sources to the workings of language (meaning, denotation, etc.). Much of the Nikaya* literature on this subject has been surveyed by K. N. Jayatilleke, *Early, Buddhist Theory of Knowledge* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1963); this has been discussed by Frank Hoffman in his *Rationality and Mind in Early Buddhism* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1987), Chapter 2; Henry Clark Warren, in his *Buddhism in Translation* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1896; Atheneum reprint, 1984) gives several sources concerning the avyakrta* *vastus* in his section entitled "Questions Which Tend Not to Edification" (pp. 111-128). Regarding language in the Pali sources see also John Ross Carter's *Dhamma: Western Academic and Sinhalese Buddhist Interpretations* (Tokyo: Hokuseido Press, 1978); not quite as interesting in this respect, despite its provocative title, is Peter Masefield's *Divine Revelation in Pall Buddhism* (Colombo: Sri Lanka Institute of Traditional Studies (through George Allen and Unwin), 1986) (particularly Chapter 3, which deals with the role of oral teaching in attaining the goal of the path); also George Bond, *"Word of the Buddha": The Tripitaka and Its Interpretation in* Theravada* *Buddhism* (Colombo: Buddhist Publication Society, 1982).

8. Luis O. Gómez, "Buddhist Views of Language" (see note 6).

9. B. B. Price states in his *Medieval Thought: An Introduction* (Oxford and Cambridge, Mass.: Basil Blackwell, 1992), pp. 122-123, that "grappling with language was as much at the heart of scholasticism as grappling with ideas. The distinctiveness of schools of scholastic thought, as well as their similarities, lay embedded in intricate reasonings, and the vehicle of expression was language."

10. As enunciated, for example, in the introduction to Arthur Lovejoy's monumental study, *The Great Chain of Being* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1964), reprint of the 1936 ed.

11. I should from the outset make it clear that I am using the term *scripture* in this volume in a very broad sense that (at the risk of overextending the etymological meaning of the word and even, perhaps, its use in common parlance) excludes neither oral material nor commentarial literature. The reasons for this should become obvious in Chapter 3.

12. Although there is a vast quantity of material on language in the corpus of Buddhist philosophical literature, it is usually found in bits and pieces scattered over many works. To my knowledge, no one traditional work deals solely with language in all of its multifarious manifestations: as scripture, as the external analogue of conceptual thought, as a source of soteriological knowledge, as the very stuff of which the universe is made. Some of the richest

sources for material of this kind are works like the Pramanavarttika * (PV) of Dharmakirti* and the *Tattvasamgraha* of Santaraksita* (with Kamalasilas* commentary). In Tibet, works like Tsong kha pa's *Legs bshad snying po* (LSN) and mKhas grub rje's *sTong thun chen mo* (TTC) (see note 15) are replete with sections that deal (either explicitly or indirectly) with the subject of language, but in neither India nor Tibet do we have any kind of systematic work dealing with the subject exhaustively and in its entirety.

13. This school, founded by the great scholar and saint Tsong kha pabLo bzang grags pa (1357-1419), represents the apex of a long tradition of Buddhist scholasticism that began in the early centuries of the common era in India. An extensive history of the school is to be found in the Vaidurya* *gser po* of Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, a Tibetan text that unfortunately remains untranslated, as does the dGe lugs pa section in Thu'u kvan's famous *Grub mtha' shel kyi me long.* Nor is the state of historical scholarship on this school much better from the viewpoint of the Western academy. David Snellgrove, in his recently published *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism* (Boston: Shambhala, 1987) stops the narrative short of discussing the dGe lugs pas. G. Tucci, in his *The Religions of Tibet*, trans. G. Samuel (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), deals with the dGe lugs pas only sporadically. Helmut Hoffman's *The Religions of Tibet*, trans. E. Fitzgerald (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1961), does dedicate one chapter (8) to this school. The most extensive treatments of the history of the dGe lugs pa school in English, though from different perspectives, are to be found in D. Snellgrove and H. Richardson *A Cultural History of Tibet* (New York: Praeger, 1958), and W. D. Shakabpa's *Tibet: A Political History* (New Haven; Conn.: Yale University Press, 1967).

14. Although the question of scholasticism as an intellectual-religious movement in medieval Europe has, by comparison, been dealt with rather extensively (see, for example, the works of EtienneÉ Gilson, especially his *History of Medieval Philosophy in the Middle Ages* [London: 1955] and his Gifford lectures, *L'esprit de la philosophie medievale*, 2nd ed. [Paris: 1943]; M. de Wulf, *Histoire de la philosophie medleyale*, 6th ed. [Louvain: 1947]; M. Grabmann, *Die Geschichte der scholastischen Metbode*, 2 vols. [Basel: 1961]; David Knowles, *The Evolution of Medieval Thought* [New York: 1962]; Josef Pieper, *Scholasticism: Personalities and Problems of Medieval Philosophy* trans. from the German by R. Winston and C. Winston [New York: 1960]; C. Spicq, *Esquisse d'une histoire de l'exégèse latine au Moyen-Age* [Paris: 1944]; H. de Lubac, *Exègése Medievale: Les quatres sens de l'écriture*, 4 vols. [Lyons: 195964]; J. Leclerq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God* [New York: 1961; 3rd ed., 1985]), works that focus for the most part on the phenomenon of scholasticism in Europe from the eleventh to the seventeenth centuries, the term

scholasticism has until recently rarely been applied outside of a Judaic, Christian, or Islamic context. In the few instances when the phenomenon of scholasticism *has* been discussed in the context of Buddhism it is usually treated as an aberration; that is, as a departure from the "true spirit" of the religion (e.g., in E. Conze, *Buddhist Thought in India* [Ann Arbor: 1973], Chapter 1). To my knowledge no serious work has been done concerning the general phenomenon of scholasticism in cross-cultural perspective. C. Beckwith's "The Medieval Scholastic Method in Tibet and the West," in L. Epstein and R. F. Sherburne, eds., *Reflectios on Tibetan Culture* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), pp. 307-313, a short but provocative article on this very issue, came to my attention only after completion of this manuscript. Though somewhat misinformed about dGe lugs pa debating practices (a judge or *dpang po* is hardly ever present, for example), and although Beckwith himself states that "the abstruse philosophical subject-matter of most of the texts used for this paper is largely impenetrable for me both in the original languages and in the English translations," (p. 311, n. 1), the article is nonetheless insightful. It suggests, for example, a Tibetan equivalent of the European scholastic Trivium, and provides us with an interesting discussion of the threefold method of argumentation known as *dgag bzhag spong gsum,* again with reference to "Western" categories, such as the *questiones disputatae* and Abelard's *sic et non* method. More tenuous, it seems to me, is his claim that the "further study of the Tibetan scholastic method and its subsequent history could be of great comparative value for understanding the subsequent development of scientific method in the West" (p. 310), and the association of the three Tibetan categories of argumentation with putative equivalents in Popperian descriptions of the "scientific method" (p. 311, n. 2).

15. Like the *sTong thun chen mo* (TTC) of mKhas grub dGe legs dpal bzang, *Collected Works* (*gSungs 'bum*), vol. *ka,* Toh. no. 5459. My translation of this text, which informs a great deal of the present work, has been published under the title *A Dose of Emptiness* (DE) (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992).

16. On the idea of comparative analysis as a decontextualizing process see Ben-Ami Scharfstein, "The Contextual Fallacy," in Gerald James Larson and Eliot Deutsch, eds., *Interpreting Across Boundaries: New Essays in Comparative Philosophy* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1989), pp. 84-97. Of course, the process of decontextualization always represents a departure from a *particular* context and as such never succeeds in capturing an analytical category (here scholasticism) in a pure abstract form that is equally applicable to all particular contexts. Although pure decontextualization is therefore impossible, even in principle, the process of abstraction and decontextualization can be further refined as a partially abstracted category that confronts and then tran-

scends through renewed abstraction new particular contexts. The point of course is that the decontextualization of the notion of scholasticism effectuated in Chapter 1 will, to the extent that it has as a point of contextual departure Indo-Tibetan Buddhist philosophy, evince a unique set of idiosyncracies that are reflective of that tradition. The abstraction can be refined, and the idiosyncracies minimized, by considering other contexts (Europe, China, and so forth), allowing these to serve as points of departure for further decontextualization.

17. As witnessed by the great amount of scholarly activity in this area. The 1988 NEH Summer Institute on Comparative Religions held at Harvard, for example, has the theme of scripture as one of its major foci. Also, the American Academy of Religion has, as part of the Comparative Religions Section, devoted several panels to the subject in the last several years. For a more comprehensive discussion of recent work in this area, see the introduction to J. Timm, ed., *Texts in Context: Traditional Hermeneutics in South Asia* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1991).

18. See, for example, Frederick M. Denny and Rodney Taylor, eds., *The Holy Book in Comparative Perspective* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1985); Miriam Levering, ed., *Rethinking Scripture* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1990); and Wilfred Cantwell Smith's forthcoming work on the subject. On the oral aspects of written scripture, see William Graham's *Beyond the Written Word* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Michael Pye and Robert Morgan, eds., *The Cardinal Meaning: Essays in Comparative Hermeneutics; Buddhism and Christianity* (The Hague: Mouton, 1973); Jeffrey Timm, ed., *Texts in Context.*

19. The work of John Ross Carter and of George Bond especially come to mind. See note 7.

20. Several articles dealing with different aspects of scripture in the Mahayana * are to be found in the bibliography of Luis O. Gómez's articles in the *Encyclopedia of Religion* (see note 6). There has also recently appeared a collection of essays on the topic of scriptural *interpretation* edited by Donald Lopez, *Buddhist Hermeneutics* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1988).

21. I use this term guardedly, for it does not seem to me that strictly speaking there is any such thing as "Buddhist formal logic." If we take formal logic as the attempt to set forth rules for determining the truth value of statements apart from their content or cognition by individuals, then it is fair to say that formal logic is unknown to the Buddhist Pramanikas*. For an exposition of the former enterprise, see Bertrand Russell and A. N. Whitehead, *Principia Mathematica,* 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910-1913); also R. S. Y. Chi,

Buddhist Formal Logic (London: Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, 1969); D. D. Daye, "Methodological Remarks on Twentieth Century Studies of Buddhist Inference," in A. K. Narain, ed., *Studies in Pali and Buddhism,* Kashyap Festschrift (Delhi: B. R. Publishing, 1979), pp. 75-82.

22. The present study is aimed at coming to certain conclusions about the way the dGe lugs pa school of Tibetan Buddhism used and speculated about language. Although the historical analysis of intellectual currents is an element in this study, it is not primarily a historical work. I have not, therefore, gone into the issue of sectarian polemics in any great depth and have not attempted to identify all of the historical personages and positions with which the dGe lugs pas spar, a task that is, in any case, the subject of another study currently underway. Hence, for the purpose of the present analysis, I remain content to accept the dGe lugs pas' own portrayal of their opponents, realizing that it is often flawed historically.

23. The position described here was a view ascribed to a certain Hva shang by the name of "Mahayana *" who is said to have defended this view in a series of debates purported to have taken place in Tibet in the eighth century. The most recent work on this subject is D. Seyfort Ruegg's Jordan lectures, *Buddha-Nature, Mind and the Problem of Gradualism in a Comparative Perspective* (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1989); see also David Jackson's forthcoming *Enlightenment by a Single Means: Tibetan Controversies on the "Self-Sufficient White Remedy."*

24. See DE, pp. 7, 112-117, and 400-402, notes 31-33.

25. In contemporary scholarship this view has been expressed by N. Katz, "Prasanga* and Deconstruction: Tibetan Hermeneutics and the Yana* Controversy" *Philosophy East and West* 34, no. 2 (1984): 5, when he says "that all interpretation is a form of subjectivism bordering on solipsism..." We shall see later that the dGe lugs pas will want to preserve the validity of some sorts of interpretation.

26. D. Seyfort Ruegg, "On Thesis and Assertion in the Madhyamaka/dBu ma," in *Proceedings of the Csoma de Körös Symposium held at Velm-Vienna, Austria, 13-19 September 1981* (Vienna: University of Vienna Institute for Tibetan and Buddhist Studies, 1983), pp. 224-225, 234-236, discusses this question. In the *sTong thun chen mo,* for example, mKhas grub rje makes a clear distinction between *svatantra* syllogistic reasoning and syllogistic reasoning in general, the latter of which he not only considers valid but essential for spiritual progress. See also my "The Prasangika's* Views on Logic: Tibetan dGe lugs pa Exegesis on the Question of Svatantras," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* (JIP) 15 (1988): 217-224.

27. See DE, pp. 7, 117-120, 168-169, 257-285.

28. Ibid., pp. 102-103, 168-169, 257-272. D. Seyfort Ruegg, "On Thesis and Assertion," describes variants of this position in both the Indian and Tibetan traditions. His own position, that darsana * or vada* is to be distinguished from drsti* (the former being acceptable to the Madhyamaka and the latter not, p. 209) and that the Madhyamikas* repudiate theses "postulating an entity (bhava*)" (pp. 212-213) would be acceptable to dGe lugs pa exegetes with certain caveats. The latter make no distinctions between the three terms and accept claims as to the existence of entities (*dngos po/yod pa*) as Compatible with the Madhyamaka view (*lta ba*). N. Katz, "Prasanga* and Deconstruction," p. 9, puts forth the idea that even in the Pali literature the notion of holding to no position was present. He says that "agreement or disagreement understood as mere opinion (*ditthi*) and opinionatedness is precisely that which prevents one from true seeing (darsana*). By the time of the great Pali commentaries, escape from opinion was itself made into a hermeneutical principle." The view that the Prasangikas* hold no philosophical position is, most recently, to be found in the introduction to C. W. Huntington's translation of the Madhyamakavatara*, *The Emptiness of Emptiness: an Introduction to Early Indian* Madhyamika* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989); see also my review of this work in the *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 13, no. 2 (1992): pp. 152-161; and our mutual exchange in the same journal, 15, no. 1 (1992): 118-143.

29. DE, pp. 269-270.

30. See ibid., pp. 102-106.

31. As David Burrell states, "Philosophical breakthroughs depend in part on one's initial perspectives, in part on the conceptual tools available, yet finally on one's ability to put them to work." *Knowing the Unknowable God: Ibn Sina*, Maimonides, Aquinas* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986), p. 29.

Chapter One. Scholasticism

1. As translated by A. C. Graham, *Disputers of the Tao: Philosophical Argumentin Ancient China* (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1989), p. 141.

2. This is not to say that the European scholastics were themselves unaware of the similarities that existed between them. These commonalities, however, were never systematized by them into the category "scholasticism," at least

not into anything like the category that we understand as the referent of the term today.

3. On the emergence of a generic notion of "religion" and the origin of its scholarly study in the West, see Eric J. Sharpe, *Comparative Religion: A History* (London: Duckworth, 1975); also, J. Samuel Preus, *Explaining Religion: Criticism and Theory from Bodin to Freud* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1987).

4. Hence, Max Mueller's now famous adage: "To know one is to know none."

5. Although I am not sure I would limit the insights solely to the emergence of new questions, as does Jean-Paul Reding, when he states that "une telle approche conduit à un enrichissement de la réflexion philosophique, non pas par de nouvelles solutions, mais par de nouvelles questions"; *Les fondamentaux philosophiques de la rhetorique chez les sophistes grecs et chez les sophistes chinois* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1985), p. 33. Daya Krishna, "Comparative Philosophy: What It Is and What It Ought to Be," in *Interpreting Across Boundaries: New Essays in Comparative Philosophy* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1989), p. 73, makes a point similar to the one I am making here in regard to the category of philosophy in general when he says that, "philosophy is, however, nothing but the conceptual structure itself, and hence, any attempt at comparative philosophizing is bound to lead to an awareness of an alternative conceptual structure, a different way of looking at the world, a different way of mapping the cognitive terrain than that to which one is accustomed."

6. I develop the idea of comparison as an epistemic source in two recent, and as yet unpublished, papers, one delivered at the International Symposium on the Translation of Buddhist Texts, hosted by Tibet House, New Delhi, and the other presented in Kansas City, at the 1991 meeting of the American Academy of Religion. In both essays I base much of my discussion on the Indian philosophical analysis of "comparison" or "analogy" (upamana *). Although a great deal of literature exists on comparison as a method, the Indian sources provide us with a perspective that has yet to be explored in Western scholarly literature. The examination of the Indian theory of upamana* is part of my current research, whose goal is to create a critical, synthetic, interdisdplinary theory of cross-cultural comparison that takes the theoretical perspective of the Indian sources seriously.

7. See, for example, Chapter 6, "Scholasticism," of B. B. Price's *Medieval Thought*, pp. 119-144.

8. It is telling that J. A. Weisheipl's entry, "Scholasticism," in the new *Encyclopedia of Religion,* ed. M. Eliade (New York: Macmillan, 1985), vol. 13, pp.

116-119, contains no reference to non-Western scholastic traditions. A recent exception to this monocultural view of scholasticism is to be found in vols. 4-5 of John C. Plott's *Global History 01:Philosophy* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1984), where various philosophical traditions are labeled *scholastic* and grouped together, though Plott never really engages in the type of cross-cultural comparison that would suggest what makes these various movements "scholastic." Holmes Rolston's *Religious InquiryParticipation and Detachment* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1985) is a comparative study of the "spirituality" of four religious figures, some of which are clearly scholastic, but beyond some passing references to the fact that they share a common "mixedly patristic, medieval" outlook, Rolston is not concerned in that work with describing what common intellectual positions or preoccupations they might share. More recently, John B. Henderson's *Scripture, Canon and Commentary: A Comparison of Confucian and Western Exegesis* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991) attempts to draw parallels between the exegetical traditions of China and what he calls *the West* (By which he means "Christian biblical exegesis, Qur'anic exegesis, rabinnic Judaism, and Vedanta *," pp. 6-7). Henderson clearly presupposes the abstract notion of "scholasticism" as a pan-religio-philosophical phenomenon; for example, when he states that "historians of scholastic and commentarial traditions in both East and West often display a strange myopia concerning possible parallels in the intellectual history of premodern civilizations," p. 6. However, as with the previous studies, the main focus of his work is not to suggest what makes these traditions scholastic. Rather, focusing on one specific trait of scholasticism, its preoccupation with the exegesis of canonical texts, his goal is to document "the increasing uniformity of the commentarial presuppositions and procedures that grew out of attempts to interpret these [canonical] texts," p. 5 (my insertion). What is more, Henderson's work, insightful though it may be, does not deal at all with the Buddhist exegetical tradition, an omission in his work that he himself considers "the most conspicuous and troubling," p. 7, note 10.

9. His general views on the subject of comparative philosophy are to be found in a now almost forgotten essay, "Objet et Méthode de la Philosophie Comparée," *Revue de Metaphysique et de Morale*, no. 19 (1911): 541-548.

10. *Revue Philosophique de la France et de l'Étranger*, no. 90 (1920): 123-141.

11. Ibid., p. 424. This and all subsequent passages from Masson-Oursel are my own translations.

12. Ibid., p. 438; for a more extensive exposition of his views on sophism as a

philosophical movement, see his "La Sophistique," *Revue de Metaphysique et de Morale*, no. 23 (1916): 343-362; and for a critical discussion of Masson-Oursel on this question see Jean Paul Reding, *Les fondamentaux philososophiques.*

13. "La Scholastique," ibid., p. 141.

14. Ibid., p. 128.

15. Ibid., p. 129, my insertion.

16. See his *Histoire de la philosophie medievale.*

17. See the especially lucid discussion of this distinction in D. Knowles, *The Evolution of Medieval Thought*, pp. 87-89; see also G. Makdisi, "The Scholastic Method in Medieval Education: An Inquiry into Its Origins in Law and Theology," *Speculum* 49, no. 4: 643 ff.

18. Jean Leclerq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: A Study of Monastic Culture*, trans. C. Misrahi (New York: Fordham University Press, 1985; reprint of the third, 1982, edition).

19. Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983), p. 328.

20. Ibid., pp. 329-330, 404. Though beyond the scope of the present work, it would be intriguing to apply the insights of Thomas Nagel's philosophical analysis of objectivity and subjectivity to scholastic philosophy; see his *The View from Nowhere* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

21. Brian Stock, ibid., p. 328.

22. George Steiner, *Real Presences* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

23. A point also made by Henderson, *Scripture Canon and Commentary*, Chapter 6.

24. Henderson, ibid., p. 200, then goes on to state that prior to the twentieth century such a transition occurred in only three of the traditions he surveys: "the biblical, the Homeric and the Confucian (and in the last only incompletely)."

25. Henderson, ibid., p. 201, attributes what I am calling the *secularization* of scholasticism more to historical factors ("the impact of the printing revolution in early-modern Europe and China" and so forth) rather than to "any special

intellectual qualities" of the traditions that moved in the direction of secular criticism. Still, one wonders the extent to which the increasing affiliation of philosophy with the Aristotelian corpus in Europe might have contributed to the eventual split between philosophy and theology and to the eventual secularization of scholastic discourse. In India and Tibet there was never any competing movement, the counterpart to Greek philosophy, that demanded the attention and response of scholastic philosophers. Might this fact have been the type of "intellectual quality" that vitiated Indo-Tibetan Buddhism's move in the direction of secular criticism?

26. Wing-tsit Chan, "The Story of Chinese Philosophy," in *The Chinese Mind: Essentials of Chinese Philosophy and Culture,* ed. Charles Moore (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1986), p. 45.

27. This is true, it seems to me, even if they lack the *modern* historical sense that is born from post-Enlightenment historical criticism and historiographical awareness. I have argued for this in my "Vasubandhu's Vyakhyayukti * on the Authenticity of the Mahayana* Sutras*," in J. Timm, ed., *Texts and Contexts: Traditional Hermeneutics in South Asia* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992), and in my response to C. W. Huntington: "On Retreating to Method and Other Postmodem Tums," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 15, no. 1 (1992): 135-143.

28. See Paul J. Griffiths, *An Apology for Apologetics: A Study in the Logic of Interreligious Dialogue* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1991), which is in part an attempt at reviving such a tradition.

29. The notion of Christian "mysteries," as points of doctrine that are beyond rational scrutiny, may represent a counterexample to this generalization.

30. "Scholasticism," p. 116.

31. B. B. Price, *Medieval Thought,* p. 120; though it is interesting that just two paragraphs later Price offers us just such a definition, "Scholasticism was essentially a movement which attempted a methodological and philosophical demonstration of Christian theology as inherently rational and consistent."

Chapter Two. The Nature of Doctrine: The Buddha's Word and Its Transcendence

1. As translated by H. C. Warren in *Buddhism in Translation* (New York, Atheneum, 1984), p. 107.

2. Schneur Zalman, *Likutei Amarim, Tanya* (New York: Kehot Publishing Society, 1981), p. 87.

3. Ibid. p. 15.

4. This is an especially acute problem for the Islamic tradition, where the Qur'an * is still very much an oral, and therefore an external and public, document. On the oral aspect of Islamic scripture, see W. Graham, *Beyond the Written Word: Oral Aspects of Written Scriptures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

5. From Al-Hilli* Al-Babu* 'L-Hadi* *'Ashar*, trans. W. M. Miller (London: Asiatic Society, 1958), p. 27.

6. Ibid. p. 27.

7. Stated in this way, the form of the question can be seen to be part of a more general theoretical problem of which Christological questions are also a part.

8. This is a point made, very lucidly it seems to me, in Robert Gimello's "Mysticism and Meditation," in S. T. Katz, ed., *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 170-199.

9. A lengthy discussion of this topic, based on the AK account given later, is to be found in Dasabalasrimitra's* Samskrtamskrtaviniscaya*, P. no. 5865, Ngo mthsar bstan bcos *ngo*, folios 264a-b.

10. Of course, there are many more uses of the word *dharma* than the two given here, but in general these are the ones of principal relevance to philosophers. It is not an accident that the same word should have been used in both cases. The tradition's claim to the "completeness" of the Buddha's word, namely, there is nothing, no phenomenon or fact, that the Buddha did not teach, implies at least an isomorphic relationship, if not an identity, between the doctrine and phenomena. On the sense of *dharma* as "an existent thing" (synonymous with the term jñeya) see the first chapter of Abhidharmakosa* (especially I, 2-4) and its Bhasya*, as well as the introductory stanzas of the *Abhidharmasamuccaya.* See Vasubandhu, Abhidharmakosabhasya* (AKB), ed. P. Pradhan (Patna: K. P. Jayaswal Research Institute, 1967), a work of Vasubandhu (fifth century C.E.), who also wrote an autocommentary (Bhasya*) to the text. It is a pan-Tibetan opinion that the root text, which consists of verses, represents the philosophically realist position of the Vaibhasika* (Sarvastivada*) school, whereas in his commentary Vasubandhu frequently adopts the posture of a Sautrantika*, a rival realist philosophical movement.

The Kosa * is one of the first clearly scholastic texts of Indian Buddhism, though see the remarks in Chapter Ten on the question of Buddhist scholastic origins. With a few notable exceptions, most of the modern scholarly work on the different senses of the word *dharma* (Pali, *dhamma*) has been done by Japanese and German scholars. See H. Nakamura, *Indian Buddhism: A Survey with Bibliographical Notes* (IB) (Osaka: KUFS Publications, 1980), pp. 65-66, for a more complete bibliography. A more recent work is "On the Polysemy of the Word 'Dharma,' "a chapter in Fumimaro Watanabe's *Philosophy and Its Development in the Nikayas* and Abhidhamma* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983). The Tibetan dGe lugs pa school, following such passages as this one in the Prasannapada*: "*Dharmas*, because they uphold their own characteristic and lead one to the supreme *dharma*, nirvana*..." [svalaksanadharanannirvanagradharmadharanaddharmah*], in the commentary on MMK (XXIII, 7), a definition that ultimately derives from Abhidharma sources, considers *dharma* qua phenomenon as "that which adheres to its own nature" (*rang gi ngo bo 'dzin pa*), which, they say, is an etymology that derives from the root of the word, dhr*, which means "to grasp" or "uphold." This is usually said to be the definition of a dharma qua existent phenomenon (a phenomenon then being something that possesses its own nature). They extend this etymology to the Dharma as the Buddha's doctrine (in the sense of "that which allows one to adhere to or to grasp one's own final nature," nirvana* or buddhahood). For more on the dGe lugs pa view on the meaning of the word, see Jeffrey Hopkins, *Meditation on Emptiness* (MOE) (London: Wisdom Publications, 1983), pp. 214-215, 433. See also A. Hirakawa, "The Meaning of 'Dharma' and 'Abhidharma'," in *Indianisme et Bouddhisme: Mélanges Offerts a Mgr. Étienne Lamotte* (Louvain: Institut Orientaliste, 1980), pp. 159-175.

11. Carter, *Dhamma*, especially pp. 55 passim. Perusal of Carter's work will show that this same ambivalence between the linguistic and experiential aspects are present even in the Theravada* tradition; see especially p. 76. On this point see also F. Watanabe, *Philosophy*, pp. 12-13.

12. See George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984).

13. Compare to ibid., pp. 31-32.

14. Both of these last two opinions are cited in AKB (see note 16) when it comments on AK (I, 25), p. 17; P mDo 'grel *gu*, folio 41a.

15. These latter two opinions are cited in the Tibetan sources with no reference as to their Indian origins.

16. AKB, p. 17.

17. AKB (I,26cd) p. 17: caritapratipaksastu * *dharmaskandho* 'nuvarnitah*/.

18. AKB, p. 17: *evam tu* varnayantyasitiscaritasahasrani* satvanam*/ragadvesamohanadicaritabhedena/tesam* pratipaksena* bhagavata* 'sitirdharmaskandhasahasranyuktani/*. But compare this to Vyakhyayukti*, D, Toh. no. 4061, Seres tsam *si*, folio 97b, where Vasubandhu implies that the Buddha must have taught much more than 84,000 portions.

19. The idea of the three turnings of the wheel of the doctrine as a hermeneutical concept is discussed separately later. We base most of the account that follows on the Tibetan commentarial literature on the Abhisamayalamkatra*, one of the most detailed exegetical traditions of this text. We have consulted eight Tibetan commentaries (those of Tsong kha pa, Mi pham, Rong ston pa, rGyal tshab rje, mKhas grub rje, Bu ston, Se ra rJe btsun pa and 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pasee the Bibliography for full references) in our exposition; these in turn rely very heavily on the Indian sources, bringing different aspects of the Indian exegetical tradition to bear on the different problems discussed. Though we structure our exposition based on the Tibetan commentarial literature, we explore, where relevant, the position of the relevant original Indian texts on which the Tibetan account is based.

20. In early Buddhist art, for example, the Buddha was not portrayed anthro-pomorphically but through the use of certain symbols, the wheel being prominent among these; see Suryakumari A. Rao's article in *Journal of the Oriental Institute* [Baroda], 17, no. 3 (March 1968): 278-280. We also find in the Pali texts and in the later tradition the ideal of a Cakravartin king, a monarch who rules by virtue of his charismatic control of a magical wheel that he rides. In some accounts of the Buddha's life this was said to be one of two alternative destinies for Siddhartha* Gautama (the other, of course, being buddhahood); see IB p. 89, n. 14. See also B. Roland, *The Art and Architecture of India: Buddhist, Hindu, Jain* (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), pp. 59-111; also G. Obeyesekere et al., eds., *The Two Wheels of Dhamma: Essays on the Theravada Tradition in India and Ceylon* (Chambersburg, Penn.: American Academy of Religion, 1972). The notion that the three turnings of the wheel correspond roughly to the Hinayana* realist, Madhyamaka, and Yogacara* schools of tenets, respectively, is discussed later.

21. *Pali Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*, in, for example, H. Oldenberg, ed., *Vinaya Pitakam* (London: Pali Text Society, 1964), vol. 1, pp. 10 ff.

22. Here a distinction must be made between the views of the Abhidharmakosa* root text, which is said to represent the views of the Vaibhasikas*, and the

Bhasya *, which Tibetan scholars believe to represent the Sautrantika*, and also the views of Vasubandhu himself. See note 17.

23. This is the state in which the adept for the first time gains a direct realization of emptiness and the four noble truths. It is the point from which he or she is considered an aryan*. On the path literature (*sa lam*), see the forthcoming doctoral dissertation of Jules Levinson, as well as his article in the forthcoming Geshe Lhundub Sopa Festschrift, *Tibetan Literature*, ed. Roger Jackson and myself.

24. AK (VI,54): dharmacakram* tu drstamargah* (p. 371). See also the Tibetan translation in P, mNgon pa'i bstan bcos, mDo 'grel bgu, folio 34b.

25. The path of seeing is said to last for a short period of time. In the Abhidharmakosa*, for example, it is said to last for fifteen very short moments before it gives way to the next spiritual path, that of meditation; for a discussion of the fifteen-sixteen moment controversy, see Kosho Kawamura's article in *Indogaku Bukkyogaku Kenkyu* 12, no. 2 (1964): 659-665. For a brief overview of these two stages in the Tibetan literature, see MOE, pp. 96-109; see also IB, p. 128.

26. All of the similarities between the path of seeing and the wheel are given in AKB, p. 371; they are commented upon by Tsong kha pa in the *Legs bshad gser phreng* (LSSP) (Buxador, India: undated blockprint), folio 37a. On the idea of a Cakravartin king, see note 21.

27. This is the opinion of Bhadanta Ghosaka*; see AKB, p. 371; also cited by Tsong kha pa (LSSP, folio 37a), who implies that according to Ghosaka*, therefore, the *dharmacakra* refers to more than just the path of seeing.

28. rGyal tshab Dar marin chen, ed., *rNam bshad shying po'i rgyan* (NSNG) (Delhi: Ngawang Gelek Demo, 1983), folio 16b. Tsong kha pa, (LSSP, folio 37b), following AKB, is even more explicit, stating that the actual turning of the wheel of the Dharma consists of the transference of realizations from the master to the disciple, the example he gives being the instance in which the Buddha, having taught the doctrine to Kaundinya*, generated in him a direct understanding of reality (the path of seeing). The idea of the Dharma being like the great wheel of a Cakravartin king is an idea also taken up by mKhas grub rje in his *rTog dka'i snang ba* (TKN), Collected Works (Dharamsala: 1984), *vol. ka,* folio 10b.

29. AKB, p. 371: tasmat* *sa eva* dharmaparyayo* dharmacakram*... *tasya* punah* pravartanam* parasamtane*

gamanamarthajnapanat/athava* *sarva* evaryamargo* *dharmacakram* vineyasamtanakramanat*/.

30. NSNG, folio 16a.

31. There is at least one dissenting opinion among the commentators to AA as regards this point. The rNying ma pa scholar Mi pham, in his *mChart 'grel* Pundarika * (Benares: Nying ma Student Association, 1976), implies just the opposite. He says that for the Hinayana* the doctrine consists of words and letters whereas for the Mahayana* it consists of realizations; see the discussion that follows.

32. For a similar idea in the Theravda commentarial literature, see the pativeda-desana distinction in J. R. Carter, *Dhamma*, p. 76.

33. AKB (VIII,39 ab): *saddharmo* dvividhah* sasturagamadhigamatmakah*/. See also the Tibetan translation in P, mDo 'grel *ngu*, folio 93a.

34. Interestingly the Chinese followed by de la Va11ée Poussin, L'Abhidharmakosa* *de Vasubandhu* (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1925), vol. VI, p. 219, seems to differ from both the Sanskrit and the Tibetan at this point, giving several more lines worth of commentary: "it is the *dharmas* conducive to enlightenment practiced by the aryans* of the three vehicles, the fruits of the religious life obtained by the three vehicles" (my translation from the French).

35. LSSP, folio 37b; NSNG, folio 16b.

36. TKN, folio 10a. See also Bu ston's *Lung gi snye ma* (Benares: Sakya Students' Union, 1977), p. 57, where he states that "it cuts through the discordant side, hence referring to the path of seeing etc." Bu ston mentions however that the tradition of it also referring to the lower, non-aryan, paths originates with Dharmamitra. It should be noticed how the additions to the Chinese of AKB support the views of mKhas grub rje and Bu ston (see note 34).

37. AKB, p. 459: tatragamah* sutravinayabhidharmah*/. In other words, *scripture* refers to the tripitaka*, and more specifically to the twelve categories thereof. For a list of the latter as explained in the Abhisamayalamikaraloka*, see de la Vallée Poussin, L'Abhidharmakosa*, vol. VI, p. 218, n. 6. Of these twelve only the ninth (Vaipulyam*) is considered to belong exclusively to the Mahayana*, the others are said to be common to both Mahayana* and Hinayana*. mKhas grub rje (TKN, folio 9a) states that the threefold division described previously corresponds to the "three trainings" (*bslab pa gsum*) and is a division based on the content or subject matter (*brjod bya*), whereas the twelvefold division is based on the nature of the expository literature itself (*brjod byed*). In addition, we find in Se ra rJe btsun Chos kyi rgyal mtshan's *Kahabs dangpo'i spyi don* (PD) (Bylakuppe: Sera Je Press, undated woodblock), folio 58b, that the scriptures, or the words of the Buddha, can be divided in several other ways:

hermeneutically, into sutras * of provisional and definitive meaning; in terms of the disciples for whom it was taught, into Hinayana* and Mahayana* sutras*; and in terms of the dominant cause (*bdag rkyen*), into "words spoken from the Buddha's own mouth," "those spoken with his permission," and "those spoken due to his blessing." For a more detailed exposition of this last subdivision, see Geshe Rabten, *Echoes of Voidness*, trans. S. Batchelor (London: Wisdom Publications, 1983), pp. 22-24, 27-28.

38. A more lengthy treatment is to be found in Samskrtasamskrtaviniscaya*, Chapter 33, folios 265b-266b; see also Jan Nattier, *Once upon a Future Time* (Berkeley; Calif.: Asian Humanities Press, 1992).

39. Needless to say, this is an extremely pessimistic stance, implying (depending on one's interpretation of *adhigama*) that there can be no more aryans* in the world. The position, however, is ascribed to "someone," implying that it is not Vasubandhu's own. Indeed, following this lead, dGe 'dun grub, the first Dalai Lama, states in his commentary to the AKB, the *mDzod* tik* *thar lam gsal byed* (Benares: Pleasure of Elegant Sayings, 1973), p. 388, that this is not the view of the Mahayana* Prajnaparamita* tradition, which believes that the doctrine survives for a much longer period of time. For another detailed discussion of the canonical literature on the longevity of the Dharma, see also de la Vallée Poussin, L'Abhidharmakosa*, pp. 220-222, note 2.

40. AKB (VIII,39cd), p. 459.

41. See LSSP, p. 126b.

42. This in turn is based on the Dharanisvararaja* Sutra*, mentioned earlier. E. H. Johnston and T. Chowdhury, eds. *The* Ratnagotravibhaga* Mahayanottaratantrasatra* (UT) (Patna: Bihar Research Society, 1950), p. 3: svalaksanenanugatani* caisam*/yathakramam* Dharanirajasatre*/. Concerning the authorship and date of this text, see J. Takasaki, *A Study on the* Ratnagotravibhaga* (Rome: IsMEO, 1966), p. 146. The Tibetan translation is to be found in D, Sems tsam *phi* folio 54b.

43. UT, verse 11: nirodhamargasatyabhyam* samgrhita* viragita*. "The (doctrine) of nonattachment is said to be subsumed under the truths of cessation and the path." D, Seres tsam *phi* folio 55a.

44. See, for example, PD, folio 114a.

45. UT, verse 10: acintyadvayaniskalpasuddhivyaktivipaksatah*/*yo yena ca* virago* *'sau* dharmah* satyadvilaksanah*/. Also D, Sems tsam *phi* folio 55a.

46. Existence, nonexistence, both, and neither. For the dGe lugs pa interpretation of the catuskoti*, see DE, pp. 102-112, 293-305.

47. Takasaki, *A Study on the* Ratnagotravibhaga * p. 166. See the following note for the Sanskrit.

48. In the commentary to UT, verse 12 (p. 11) we find: asatsadasannobhayaprakaraiscaturbhirapi* tarkagocaratvt*/sarvarutaravitago-savakpathaniruktisamketavyavaharahilapairanabhilapyatvat*/aryanam* ca pratyatmavedaniyatvat*/, expressing exactly these aspects of the term *acintya.*

49. Interestingly, UT (verse 10) does state that the doctrine is both "that which is (*yo*) the freedom from attachment (*viraga*)" and "that by virtue of which (*yena*) the freedom from attachment comes about." In the latter sense, however, it is not scripture as a linguistic entity that is considered the agent that directly brings about emancipation. Instead, it is the set of realizations that constitute the truth of the path that is considered the agent here.

50. AKB (I,25), p. 17: dharmaskandhasahasrani* yanyasitim* *jagau* munih*/tani* vaknama* vetyesam* rupasamskara* samgrahah*/.

51. AKB, p. 17: yesam* vak* svabhavam* *buddhavacanam* tesam* tani* rupaskandha* sampgrhitani*/yesam* narnasvabhavam* tesam* samskaraskandhena*.

52. Tsong kha pa (LSSP, folios 54b-55a) rejects this as a valid stance, though expounding in great detail that it is in fact the view of certain Hinayana* schools, and distinguishes between the views of the Vaibhasikas* and Sautrantikas in this regard. He states that it is the Vaibhasika's* opinion that the Buddha's word is a samskara*, which is neither form nor consciousness, whereas the Sautrantika* view is that it is of the nature of form; see P. Jaini, "The Vaibhasika* Theory of Words and Meanings," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 22 (1959): 95-107.

53. LSSP, folios 55a-56a.

54. PD, folios 61a-b.

55. The nirmana* and sambhoga* kayas*; on the theories of the Buddha's body in Indo-Tibetan scholasticism, see John Makransky, "Controversy over Dharmakaya* in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism: An Historical-Critical Analysis of Abhisamayalamkara* Chapter Eight and Its Commentaries in Relation to the Large Prajnaparamitasatra* and the Yogacara* Tradition" (Doctoral dissertation, University of WisconsinMadison].

56. LSSP, folio 55a.

57. PD, folio 57b.

58. LSSP, folio 52b.

59. This view of language and predication is somewhat limited. Though it may work as a model in the case of imperative sentences, in which a clear end can be distinguished from a purpose, it is not clear how these second and third elements could be distinguished in the case of a simple declarative sentence such as "The cow is white." What possible goal could there be in such a case over and above letting another person know the fact of the cow's whiteness? Hence, in the case of declarative sentences the purpose and goal seem to merge. It is interesting to note in passing that the views concerning the functions of religious language expressed here are in certain respects similar to those expressed by the advocates of "speech act" theory. See, for example, J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962); and J. R. Searle, *Speech Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969). It is also interesting to compare this theory of the prerequisites that must be fulfilled by sacred texts with Wilhelm von Humboldt's theory concerning the proper functions of an institution of higher learning. J. F. Lyotard, in *The Postmodern Condition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), p. 33, characterizes the latter as follows: "Humboldt therefore invokes a spirit (what Fichte calls Life), animated by three ambitions, or better, by a single, threefold aspiration: 'that of deriving everything from an original principle' (corresponding to scientific inquiry), 'that of relating everything to an ideal' (governing ethical and social practice) and 'that of unifying this principle and this ideal in a single Idea' (ensuring that the scientific search for true causes always coincides with the pursuit of just ends in moral and political life)."

60. UT (V,18), p. 117; PD, folio 58b.

61. NSNG, p. 6. This is also the definition given by Rong ston pa in his *dKa' gnas zab don gnad kyi zla 'od* (Benares: Sakya Students' Union, 1980), folio 3a. rJe btsun pa, PD, folio 59a, adds that it must be pure speech (*ngag rnam dag*), but otherwise follows NSNG. See also rGyal tshab rje's comments in the Preface to his subcommentary on Aryadeva's * Catuhsataka,* Collected Works, *vol. ka*, where he quotes Candrakirti's commentary, to the effect that sastras* are so called because they "correct conceptions."

62. Bu ston, *Lung gi snye ma*, p. 5.

63. UT (V,19), p. 177.

64. See Chapter Three; also my "Vasubandhu's Vyakhyayukti* on the Authenticity of the Mahayana* Sutras*."

65. That the sound of the words, and not the written words, is the actual text is probably a reflection of the fact that for much of its early history the spoken and not the written word was passed down from one generation of Buddhist monks to the next. See W. Graham, *Beyond the Written Word*, pp. 68 passim.

66. PD, folio 61a.

67. Nor is Buddhism alone in adopting such a pragmatic attitude toward its doctrines. In the *Chuang tzu* we find the following passage, "Fishing baskets are employed to catch fish; but when the fish are got, the men forget the baskets; snares are employed to catch hares; but when the hares are got the men forget the snares. Words are employed to convey ideas; but when the ideas are grasped, men forget the words," *Chuang tzu,* trans. James Legge (arranged by Clae Waltham) (New York: Ace Books, 1971). This passage is from Chapter 26.

68. PD, folio 117a.

69. The Zen Master Eisai perhaps comes most clearly to mind in this regard. Y. Yokoi and D. Victoria, in *Zen Master* Dogen *: *An Introduction with Selected Writings* (Tokyo: John Weaterhill, 1976), p. 20, state of Eisai: "He further taught that the Buddhist teachings or law (Dharma) were identical with the Buddha mind, not with the sutras*, the latter being but the temporary expression of the Buddha's own enlightened mind. For him, the Buddha mind came first and the sutras second. However fine and profound the sutras* might be, they were of no value unless one had directly realized the Buddha-mind. In short, Eisai taught that the Buddha-mind is directly transmitted from Buddha to Buddha apart from the sutras*."

70. Both Santideva* and Atisa* (who follows him) are very strong critics of this extreme. See, for example, Bodhicaryavatara* (V,105-109) and Atisa's* Mahayanapathasadhanavamasamghraha* in Doobum Tulku and G. H. Mullin, eds., Atisa* *and Buddhism in Tibet* (Delhi: Tibet House, 1983). Again, we are reminded that the purpose of study is something beyond mere intellectual achievement. In discussing the four qualities of religious language, rJe btsun pa (PD, folio 20b) states: "The ultimate purpose is that by studying the introduction to the text, attraction (for the text itself) arises; from that, the wish to strive (to understand it); and from that, actually studying and contemplating it. And what is the purpose of *that?* It is that, based on the (study and contemplation of the doctrine), ultimately, one will obtain the Supreme Good, which is Omniscience."

71. Perhaps the most extensive systematic survey on the doctrine of srutacintabhavanamayiprajna* is to be found in 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa'i rdo rje, *Thos bsam sgom gsum gyi rnam bzhags,* Collected Works, vol. 12 (New Delhi: Ngawang Gelek Demo, 1974), pp. 436-474.

72. AKB, pp. 341-342; P, mDo 'grel *ngu,* folio 14a.

73. AKB, p. 334; P, mDo 'grel *ngu,* folios 9a-b.

74. AK, (VI,5cd): namobhayarthavisaya* srutamayyadika* dhiyah*/. AKB, p. 334; P, mDo 'grel *ngu,* folio 9b.

75. Here, the Bhasya * adds that sometimes the letters, the words, elicit the meaning and that at other times the meanings elicit the words within the process of "thinking."

76. On the relationship between the wisdom that comes from listening and thinking and the meaning of scripture, Kamalasila* states in his Bhavanakrama*: "He (the bodhisattva) should first awaken the wisdom which comes of study (listening) and learning (thinking); for it is with this wisdom that he begins to understand the meaning of scripture.... And then with the wisdom which comes of consideration, he penetrates even more deeply into the meaning of scripture, both explicit (definitive) and implicit (provisional), for it is only through this wisdom that he may be certain of meditating upon what is real, and not upon what is unreal." As translated by Stephan Beyer, *The Buddhist Exiverience* (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Publishing, 1974), pp. 104-105, my parentheses.

77. In the Tibetan tradition, as well as being discussed in the context of the Abhidharmakosa*, it is also discussed in the context of an analysis of the nature of the path of preparation (prayogamarga*, *sbyor lam*). See, for example, rGyal tshab's remarks in NSNG (undated edition based on the dGa' ldan blocks), folios 102a-b; also 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa's remarks, *Thos bsam sgom gsum gyi rnam bzhags*, pp. 441-442.

78. AKB, pp. 334-335.

79. PD, folio 55a.

80. PD, folio 55b.

81. This latter argument in PD is obscure. First of all, in quoting the position of his opponent (who seems to be Vasubandhu, given his views on the nature of the first and third types of knowledge) he makes no mention of the criterion of logical analysis as characteristic of the second type of knowledge. The logic of the argument itself is also suspect, involving the substitution of a contrapositive at one point.

Chapter Three. Hermeneutics: The Truth and Meaning of Scripture

1. As translated by G. Makdisi, in "The Scholastic Method in Medieval Education," p. 654.

2. See the discussion of this question in K. Cragg and M. Speight, eds., *Islam from Within: Anthology of a Religion* (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Publishing, 1980], p. 101.

3. See Shalon Carmy, "Biblical Exegesis: Jewish Views," in M. Eliade, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1985), vol. 2, pp. 136-152.

4. Ibid., pp. 137-139.

5. See, for example, Frederic W. Farrar, *History of Interpretation: Bampton Lectures 1885* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1886).

6. J. A. Endres, "Ueber den Ursprung und die Entwicklung der scholastischen Lehrmethode," *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 2 (1889): 52-59.

7. M. Grabmann, *Die Geschichte der scholastischen Metbode.*

8. *Speculum* 49, no. 2 (1974): 640-661.

9. See, for example, B. B. Price, *Medieval Thought*, p. 138.

10. For a more in-depth treatment of some of the issues discussed in this chapter, see Donald S. Lopez, Jr., ed., *Buddhist Hermeneutics* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1988), a collection of eleven essays on a wide range of Buddhist hermeneutical traditions: Pali, Mahayana * (both South and East Asian), and Tantric.

11. I use the word in the plural because there is no one Buddhist canon. The Pali tipitaka*, a corpus of over forty volumes, is the source for the Theravada* tradition. In addition Tibetan and Chinese canons are even more extensive. Canonization as a theoretical issue has, in the case of Buddhism, not received the study it deserves. Why, for example, the Buddhist (and even Taoist and Confucian) canons are as large as they are (compared to, say, the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament or the Qur'an*), or put another way, why the compilers of these canons consider a vast amount of exegetical literature "canonical," is an interesting, but unexplored, question. On the different canons, see W. E. Clark, "Some Problems in the Criticism of the Sources for Early Buddhism," *Harvard TheologicaI Review* 18, no. 2 (1930): 121-147; S. Collins, "On the Very Idea of a Pali Canon," *Journal of the Pall Text Society* 15: 89-126; K. K. S. Chen, "The Chinese Tripitaka*," Chapter 8 of *Buddhism in China: A Historical Survey* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1964); and L. Lancaster, "Buddhist Literature: Its Canons, Scribes and Editors," in W. D. O'Flahtery, ed., *The Critical Study of Sacred Texts* (Berkeley, Calif.: Berkeley Religious Studies Series, 1979), pp. 215-230.

12. I am here particularly thinking of Esho Mikogami who, in "The Problem of Verbal Testimony in Yogacara* Buddhism," Bukkyogaku* kenkyu*, nos. 32 and 33 (1977), ascribes to the Yogacarabhumi* a quite rigid dogmatism.

13. O Bhikshus, just as a goldsmith gets his gold, First testing by melting, cutting and rubbing, Sages accept my teaching after full examination And not just out of devotion (to me).

As translated by R. A. F. Thurman, *Tsong kha pa's Speech of Gold in the Essence of True Eloquence* (EE) (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 190.

14. R. A. F. Thurman, "Buddhist Hermeneutics," *JournaI of the American Academy of Religion* 46, no. 1 (1978): 25, suggests that the Abhidharma itself "contains the earliest forms of the hermeneutical concepts," and this can certainly be agreed to provided that we make a distinction between a synthetic hermeneutic that attempts to bring together analogous doctrines into a logical whole and a dialectical hermeneutic that attempts to reconcile contradictory doctrines by interpretation. The former is first order, the latter at least second. It seems to me that the *Abhidharma* is of the synthetic, and therefore first-order, variety.

15. From Geshe T. Rabten's *Drang nges rnam 'byed legs bshad Shying po dka' gnarl rnams mchah bur bkod pa gzur gnas dka' ston* [Annotations of the *Legs bshad shying po* of Tsong kha pa, with Root Text] (Delhi: Lhun grub grags, undated), p. 5.

16. Ibid., p. 5.

17. See, for example, Bu ston's remarks in his Chos 'byung, E. Obermiller, trans. *History of Buddhism in India and Tibet* (Heidelberg: Otto Harrassowitz, 1932), p. 143.

18. See also DE, p. 35, for a discussion of this very question.

19. Indeed, one of the Bodhisattva's root vows is to refrain from "disparaging the sravakayana *" (*nyan smod*) in this way. See, for example, the list of the bodhisattva vows in Pha bong kha pa's *Thun drug gyi rnal 'byor*, found in *bLa ma'i rnal 'byor* [Dharamsala: Shes rig par khang, undated], p. 28.

20. R. N. Dandekar, "Vedas," entry in the *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. M. Eliade (New York: Macmillan, 1986), vol. 15, pp. 214-217.

21. For a more detailed exposition of the *gter ma* tradition in the rNying ma school of Tibetan Buddhism, see Tulku Thondup Rinpoche, *Hidden Teachings of Tibet*, ed. H. Talbot (London: Wisdom Publications, 1986); and Janet Gyatso's essay on *gter* ma in J. I. Cabezón and R. Jackson, eds., *Tibetan Literature.*

22. See my "Vasubandhu's Vyakhyayukti*."

23. Gershom Scholem, "Traditional Commentary as Religious Categories in Judaism," in *Understanding Jewish Theology*, ed. J. Neusner (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1973), pp. 45-51.

24. Which is to say that, once the canon had been closed, the influx of creativity into the tradition came through exegesis and not through the creation of new primary scriptural material. This is a point also made by Jonathan Z. Smith, when he states that "The process of arbitrary limitation and of overcoming limitation through ingenuity recurs. As the pressure is intensified through extension and through novelty, because of the presupposition of canonical completeness, it will be the task of the hermeneute to develop procedures that will allow the canon to be applied without alteration, or at least without admitting to alterationwhat Henry Maine analyzed as the process of 'legal fiction.' " "Sacred Persistence: Toward a Redescription of Canon," in *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown,* pp. 36-52.

25. Bu ston Rin chen grub, *Collected Works*, edited by Lokesh Candra [Delhi: 1956-71]. *Chos 'byung* volume, p. 677.

26. For an enumeration and explanation of these sixty qualities in an Indian source, see Dasabalasrimitra *, Sarmkrtsamskrtaviniscaya*, op. cit., folios 256a-258a.

27. Ibid., p. 651.

28. Ibid., pp. 652-653.

29. Ibid., p. 654.

30. For a more detailed exposition of this hierarchical scheme in Tibetan doxographical literature, see my "The Canonization of Philosophy and the Rhetoric of Siddhanta* in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism," in *Buddha Nature,* Minoru Kiyota Festschrift (San Francisco: Buddhist Books International, 1991), pp. 7-26.

31. For more on these debates, see Paul Williams, "A Note on Some Aspects of Mi bskyod rdo rje's Critique of dGe lugs pa Madhyamaka," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 11 (1983): 125-145.

32. Se ra rJe btsun Chos kyi rgyal mtshan, *'Gag Inn klu grub dgongs rgyan* (New Delhi: Jampa Choegyal, 1969), p. 9.

33. Ibid., p. 18.

34. This seems to be what N. Katz ("Prasanga* and Deconstruction," p. 9) means when he says that "there is no uniformity of letter in what he teaches but a uniformity of purpose" and seems to be closely tied to what he calls *adept-based hermeneutics* (pp. 12-15). His categories of "text-based" and "adept-based" hermeneutics, it seems to me, overlap much more than he would suggest, which brings into question their usefulness as descriptive tools.

35. In M. Kiyota's Mahayana * *Buddhist Meditation* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1978), p. 177. See also Katz's comments on *kula* and *gotra* in "Prasanga* and Deconstruction," p. 2; also H. V. Guenter, "The Levels of Understanding in Buddhism," anothologized in *Tibetan Buddhism in Western Perspective* (Emeryville, Calif.: Dharma Publishing, 1977), pp. 60-82.

36. Perhaps only in this limited sense can the enterprise of Buddhist hermeneutics be compared to Derridean deconstructionism. See Katz ("Prasanga* and Deconstruction"), who goes too far in the analogy.

37. Bu ston, *Chos 'byung*, p. 653; see note 25.

38. As per the famous lines from the Aksayamatinirdesa* Sutra* (The Tibetan is to be found in P no. 842, redo sna tshogs, vol. *bu*, folio 154a). The Sanskrit reads:

> arthapratisaranena* bhavitavyam* *na* vyañjana pratisaranena* dharmapratisaranena* bhavitavyam* na pudgalapratisaranena*...

Because of its importance to the Tibetan scholastic tradition, numerous references are to be found in Tibetan religious literature concerning the "four reliances." One of the more extensive expositions is to be found in lCang skya rol pa'i rdo rje's *Grub mtha'* (Banares: Pleasure of Elegant Saying Press, 1970), pp. 144, 162 passim.; see also MOE, pp. 425, 597-599; and EE, pp. 113-130. We must note, however, that some Tibetan expositions of the four reliances vary somewhat from the one found in the Aksayamatinirdesa* passage just cited. See my "Vasubandhu's Vyakhyayukti*," and DE, p. 445, for a detailed discussion of these variants.

39. As paraphrased by Tsong kha pa, in *Drang nges legs bshad snying po* (mTsho sngon: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1987), p. 342.

40. See D. Seyfort Ruegg, "Purport, Implicate and Presupposition: Sanskrit Abhipraya* and Tibetan *dGongs pa/dGongs gzhi* as Hermeneutical Concepts," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 13 (1985): 309-325.

41. It seems that the Mahasamghikas*, however, considered all of the Buddha's word to be of definitive meaning. See E. Lamotte, "La critique d'interpretation dans le bouddhisme," Brussels University Libre, Institut de Philosophie et d'Histoire Orientales et Slaves, *Annuaire* 9 (1949): 348-349. See also DE, pp. 327-334.

42. K. N. Jayatilleke, *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1963), p. 363, my insertion.

43. mKhas grub rje (DE, p. 35) states, as we have seen, that some Hinayanists* claim that *all* of the Buddha's word is, by definition, of definitive meaning

whereas others accept both definitive and provisional texts and divide them according to what can be accepted literally and what cannot. See previous note and also my "Vasubandhu's Vyakhyayukti. *"

44. See note 3.

45. Both M. Broido, "Abhipraya*: Implications in Tibetan Literature," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 12 (1984): 1-22, and D. Seyfort Ruegg, "Purport, Impliciate and Presupposition," go to great lengths to explain the differences between *dgongs pa* and *dgongs gzhi*. The former I translate as "intention," the latter as "the referent that is the (true) intention" (taking the compound not in a possesive *tatpurusa* sense but in an appositional karmadharaya* one). This rather simple move, it seems to me, solves the problem of explaining why all of the Buddha's words have a *dgongs pa* (intention) but not necessarily a *dgongs gzhi* (a referent that is the true or hidden intention), for the latter implies the existence of a more fundamental intention underlying the superficial one.

46. D. Seyfort Ruegg, ibid., p. 311, seems to unneccessarily complicate things in his explanation of the meaning of this third criterion by calling it "incompatibility between the primary, surface meaning (*dngos la gnod byed*, Sanskrit mukhyarthabadha*) of a given Sutra* or Sutra* passage and the real purport of the Buddha's teaching established by interpretation of the whole corpus of the Buddha's Word (*buddhavacana*), i.e. the entire canonical corpus." His note on this point (p. 323, n. 12), though interesting in tracing the earliest occurence of these three criteria to bSod nams rtse mo (1142-82), offers no further insight into what he means by the somewhat obscure passage just cited.

47. What is referred to here, of course, is that the passage in some way contradicts our experience of reality, of the way things are, as this is experienced by the two forms of valid cognition: direct perception and inference. As we have seen, there is a parallel to this in the first two of the four criteria that the Babylonian Jewish writer, Sa'adhyah Gaon (d. 942), gives as possible reasons for departing from the literal interpretation of scripture, "(1) when the literal meaning contradicts reason (e.g. 'God is a consuming fire' [*Deut.* 4:24] must be interpreted metaphorically); (2) when the literal meaning contradicts sense experience (e.g., Eve was not 'the mother of all living beings' [Gen. 3:21] but rather the mother of human life." From S. Karmy, "Biblical Exegesis," p. 136.

48. Ho Ui et. al., *A Complete Catalogue of the Tibetan Canons*, (Tokyo: Imperial University of Japan, 1934), p. 609, no. 4020.

49. Ibid., p. 609, no. 4021.

50. Ibid., p. 609, no. 4022.

51. For more on the question of yana * interpretation, see N. Katz, "Prasanga* and Deconstruction."

52. Mahayanasutralamkara*, ed. P. L. Vaidya (Darbhanga: Mithila Institute, 1963), p. 68.

53. Ibid., p. 68: nairatmyasya* tulyavad* ekayanata* sravakadinam* atmabhavata* samanyadyata* yanamiti* krtva*...

54. Lankavatara* Sutra*, ed. P. L. Vaidya (Darbhanga: Mithila Institute, 1963), p. 33: bhagavanaha*na hi mahamate* tirthakaratmavada* tulyo mama tathagatagarbhopadesah*/kim* *tu*, mahamate*, tathagatah*, sunyata*... padarthanam* tathagatagarbhopadesam* krtva*... desayanti*/. See also J. Takasaki, "Sources of the Lankavatara* and Its Position in Mahayana* Buddhism," in L. A. Hercus et al., eds., *Indological and Buddhist Studies*, de Jong Festschrift (Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1982), especially pp. 552-557.

55. Mahayanasutralamkara* (XI, 54), p. 69.

56. The idea presumably being that if these beings *thought* that there was only one final path, the Mahayana*, they would have made the effort to continue along this superior path instead of availing themselves of traveling along the easier path of the Sravakayana*.

57. Lankavatara*, p. 33: tathagata* arhantah* samyaksarnbuddha* balanam* nairatmyasamtrasapadavivarjanartham* *nirvikalpa* nirabhasagocaram* tathagatagarbhamukhopadesena* desayanti*/.

58. On this very important concept in Mahayana* Buddhism, see M. Pye, *Skillful Means* (London: Duckworth, 1978); see also M. Tatz's forthcoming translation of the Upayakausalya* Sutra*.

59. P no. 842, mDo na tshogs, vol. *bu*, folio 155b. For the commentary to this section see P mDo 'grel, vol. *ci*, folios 266b-267a. Also cited in *Legs bshad nying po* (mTsho sngon: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1987), pp. 405-405; see also DE, pp. 73, 77. For a discussion of the textual problems associated with this passage, see MOE, p. 866, note 537.

60. See, for example, D. Lopez, *A Study of Svatantrika* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Snow Lion, 1987], pp. 224-226, 281-289.

61. This seems to be Ruegg's position when he states ("Purport," p. 318) that emptiness can hardly involve "propositional content."

62. Interestingly, this is the same conclusion that Vasubandhu comes to in his Vyakhyayukti *. See my "Vasubandhu's Vyakhyayukti*."

63. It is interesting that in other religious traditions with a strong scriptural basis, such as Islam, it is also the case that many changes in doctrinal viewpoints are accomplished not through challenges to the authenticity or pragmatic validty of texts but through challenges to interpretation. This seems to be the case, for example, with many issues that are pressing to contemporary Muslims, that of the position of women primary among them. As several scholars have suggested, the Qur'an* was in many ways revolutionary in the advocacy of the rights of women. Though the advocacy of a patriarchal sturcture is clearly evident from such examples as Sara 4:34, many Muslims, women included, believe that it may in part have been the misinterpretation of the Qur'an* in later times that led to the increased marginalization of women in Islamic societies, and that therefore its reinterpretation today may provide the greatest hope for the improved status of women. See, for example, E. W. Fernea and B. Q. Bezirgan, eds., *Middle Eastern Muslim Women Speak* (Austin and London: University of Texas Press, 1977), pp. xxiii-xxxv; J. I. Smith, "Islam," in A. Sharma, ed., *Women in World Religions* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1987), pp. 242-243; D. L. Carmody, *Women and World Religions* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1988), p. 205; K. Cragg and R. M. Speight, *Islam from Within*, pp. 337-247.

Chapter Four. Commentary: The Enterprise of Exegesis

1. As cited by Huston Smith in *Forgotten Truth* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), p. 118.

2. This is not to imply that in scholastic Buddhism the idea of receiving revelation directly from an enlightened being in a visionary experience is denied. The *gter ma* (see earlier) can of course also be seen as another form of revelation that has effectively left the canon open. See note 16.

3. Henri de Lubac, Exégèse *Medievale* (Lyons: Aubier, 1959-1964) (in four volumes); more accessible is de Lubac's *The Sources of Revelation* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968). John Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977); for a discussion of the formation, development and genres of tafsir* or Qur'anic interpretation, see Andrew Rippin, ed., *Approaches to the Interpretation of the* Qur'an* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); Helmut Gatje's The Qur'an*

and Its Exegesis, trans. and ed. Alfred T. Welch (London and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), is a wonderful anthology of both classical and modern exegetical material.

4. Consider, for example, the following passage, attributed to the Buddha and cited in the Vyakhyayukti * of Vasubandhu, P no. 5562, Seres tsam *si*, p/286, folio side 5, line 3 (hereafter, this alternative mode of citation will be rendered, e.g., 286-5-3):

> By studying one will understand phenomena.
>
> By studying one will turn away from sin.
>
> By studying one will turn away from what is useless.
>
> By studying one will attain nirvana*.

5. Here names like the great Korean Seon master Chi-nul, the founder of the Japanese Soto Zen school, Dogen*, and the contemporary Ch'an master Hsü-yün (1911-1949) come to mind. See Robert E. Buswell, Jr., *The Korean Approach to Zen* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983); Y. Yokoi and D. Victoria, *Zen Master* Dogen*: *An Introduction to Selected Writings* (Tokyo: John Weatherhill, 1976); K. Tanahashi, ed., *Moon in a Dewdrop: Writings of Zen Master* Dogen* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1985); Hsü-Yün, *Essentials of the Ch'an Dharma* (Cholla Namdo, Korea: International Meditation Center, Song Kwang Sa Monastery, undated).

6. As translated by Doobum Tulku and G. H. Mullin in *Atisha and Buddhism in Tibet* (Delhi: Tibet House, 1983), p. 25.

7. Tsong kha pa, *Lain rim chen mo, gSungs bum* (Collected Works) (New Delhi: Ngawang Gelek Demo, 1975), vol. *pa*, folio 367a.

8. Translated from the Tibetan (Sarnath: Pleasure of Elegant Sayings, 1978), p. 5.

9. Vasubandhu, Mahayanasatralamkaratika*, P no. 5530, Sems tsam *bi*, 166-1-2, a point that he reiterates in his Vyakhyayukti*.

10. On the "giving of the doctrine" see, for example, Mahayanasutralamakara* (XII,5), (XVI,52) and (XIX,42).

11. Barry W. Holtz, ed., *Back to the Sources* (New York: Summit Books, 1984), pp. 11, 13.

12. As regards the nature of the Buddha's word and his role as "lawgiver," see P. Olivelle's remarks concerning the Vinayapitaka* in "Function of Textual Tradition in Sannyasin* Orders," in *Identity and Division in Cults and Sects in South Asia*, ed. Peter Gaeffke and David A. Utz (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1984), pp. 45-57.

13. See my works, "The Concepts of Truth and Meaning in the Buddhist Scriptures," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 4, no. 1 (1981); "The Canonization of Philosophy and the Rhetoric of Siddhanta * in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism," in the Minoru Kiyota Festschrift, *Buddha Nature*, ed. P. J. Griffiths and J. Keenan (San Francisco: Buddhist Books International, 1991); and "Vasubandhu's Vyakhyayukti* on the Authenticity of the Mahayana* Scriptures."

14. See D. Seyfort Ruegg, "Purport, Implicate and Presupposition: Sanskrit Abhipraya* and Tibetan *dGongs pa/dGongs gzhi* as Hermeneutical Concepts," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 13 (1985): 309-325.

15. Relevant to this issue is the distinction made by Brian Stock between tradition and traditionality; see his *Listening for the Text: On the Uses of the Past* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990).

16. This is not to imply that scholastics denied the idea of receiving revelation directly from an enlightened being is a visionary experience. In the discussion of the concept of upadesa* (*gdams ngag*) as presented in the AA commentarial literature, it is clearly stated that anyone who attains the "Samadhi* of the Dharma Stream" (*chos rgyun gyi ting nge 'dzin*), obtained in the Path of Accumulation (sambharamarga*, *tshogs lam*), achieves, in the words of rGyal tshab Dar marin chen, "the ability to actually see the Buddha and to actually hear the instructions (galares ngag) from a Superior Nirmanakaya* (*mchog gi sprukl sku*)." See Se ra rJe btsun Chos kyi rgyal mtshan's *Khabs dang po'i spyi don* (Bylakuppe: Se ra byes blockprint, undated), folios 93b-94b; and also the *Legs bshad gSer phreng* of Tsong kha pa (Buxador: from the woodblocks presently housed at 'Bras spung, undated), folio 112aff. See also note 23.

17. Gershom G. Scholem, "Tradition and Commentary as Religious Categories in Judaism," in *Arguments and Doctrines*, ed. Arthur A. Cohen (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), pp. 303-322. His polarization of system and commentary I find baffling, for surely the two enterprises are not incommensurable.

18. In an interesting passage in the Vyakhyayukti*, Vasubandhu states that even the Buddha's words must be considered sastra*: "It is perfectly appropriate to consider the Buddha's words to fulfill the definition of the word 'sastra*.' Something is a sastra* because, in its definitive formulation (*nges pa'i tshig du*), it opposes (*'chos pa*) and protects (*skyob par byed pa*)

> That which overcomes all of the enemies, the afflictions, And protects one from the lower realms and samsara*,

It is because it possessess the qualities of overcoming and protection that it is a sastra *.

These two qualities are absent in (the treatises of) other systems.

Therefore, only the words of the Buddha are ultimately sastras*. Hence, because of the qualities of overcoming and protection one should exert oneself in apprehending the meaning" [289-3-4 to 289-3-7].

19. This, of course, is the subject of the fourth chapter of Vasubandhu's Vyakhyayukti*, which I have discussed at length in "Vasubandhu's Vyakhyayukti* on the Authenticity of the Mahayana* Scriptures."

20. Certain key *Abhidharma* texts, works like Nagarjuna's* Mulamadhyamakakarika*, Aryadeva's Catuhsataka*, certain of the works attributed to Maitreya and the Yogacarabhumi* of Asanga* can all be said to have achieved this level of authoritativeness at different times. The life of the eighth century Chinese pilgrim, Hiuen-Tsiang, and his experiences in India is telling in this regard; see S. Beal, *The Life of Hiuen-Tsiang* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., 1911); also *Si-yu-ki. Buddhist Records of the Western World,* trans. S. Beal (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1981; reprint of the 1884 edition).

21. See D. Seyfort Ruegg, "On the Religion and Early History of the dBu ma (Madhyamaka) in Tibet," in M. Aris and Sang Suu Kyi, eds., *Tibetan Studies in Honour of Hugh Richardson* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1980), p. 278.

22. Ibid., p. 279.

23. V. Bhattacharya, ed., BCA (I,2) (Calcutta: The Asiatic Scoiety, 1960). For a Tibetan example of this see Lo bzang rta dbyangs's *sNying rje chen po la bstod pa'i tshigs bcad brgya rtsa brgyad pa rin chen shal phreng zhes bya ba bzhugs so* (Dharamsala: Shes rig dpar khang, 1983), verses 101-103; and my translation of the latter, *One Hundred and Eight Verses in Praise of Great Compassion* (Mysore: Mysore Printing and Publishing, 1984), p. 25.

24. We find a similar notion in the *Analects* of Confucius, for example; see *Analects* (VII,1-3), trans. A. Waley (New York: Vintage Books, reprint of the 1938 ed.). In this regard the Tibetan *gter ma* ("hidden treasure") tradition, claiming, as it does, the continuous and novel nature of revelation, is an interesting counterexample to the scholastic commentarial tradition, as is the Mormon notion that revelation from God to the Elders of the Church is still forthcoming. See Tulku Thondup Rinpoche, *Hidden Teachings of Tibet: An Explanation of the Terma Tradition of the Nyingma School of Buddhism* (London: Wisdom Publications, 1986), ed. H. Talbott; also Kent P. Jackson, "Latter Day Saints: A Dynamic Scriptural Process," in F. M. Denny and R. L. Taylor,

eds., The *Holy Book in Comparative Perspective* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1985), pp. 63-83.

25. rJe bstun pa, PD, folios 4a-4b, defines a "re-opener of the system (of the Prajnaparamita *)" (*shing rta srol 'byed*) as "a bodhisattva aryan* who, as a Mahayana* spiritual friend who had been prophecied by the Conqueror (Sakyamuni*) himself, independently comments on the purport of the sutras* without relying on another human being" (*mi'i rten byed gzhan lama ltos par mdo'i dgongs pa rang dbang du 'grel ba'i rgyal ba rang nyid gyis lung bstan pa'i theg chen dge ba'i bshes gnyan du 'gyur ba'i byang 'phags*).

26. In this sense, the line cited previously from Atisa*, "by study, all phenomena are understood," is taken quite literally by the scholastics.

27. This move is not dissimilar to Pierre Bourdieu's treatment of the academy in his *Homo Academicus* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988). His remarks in regard to his own enterprise very aptly apply to the phenomenon I am attempting to characterize here: "for the researcher anxious to know what he is doing, the code changes from an instrument of analysis to an object of analysis: the objectified product of the work of codification becomes, under his self-reflective gaze, the immediately readable trace of the operation of construction of the object..." (p. 7).

28. See Ram Gopal's illuminating monograph *The History and Principles of Vedic Interpretation* (New Delhi: Concept Publishing, 1983).

29. We find the question discussed not only in the *gSer phreng* of Tsong kha pa (and hence in rGyal tshab's *rNam bshad shying po'i rgyan,* in mKhas grub's *rTog dka'i snang ba* and the immense *yig cha* literature that emerges from them) but also in Bu ston's *Lung gi snye ma,* in Rong ston's *dKa' gnas zab don gnad kyi zla 'od,* and in Mi pham's *inChan 'grel* Pundarika*.

30. Vasubandhu, Mahayanasutralamkaratika*, P no. 5530, Sems tsam *bi*, 166-2-4.

31. Wittgenstein's remarks concerning private language are of course relevant here.

32. Vasubandhu, Mahayanasutralamkaratika*, folio 166-2-7.

33. Ibid., folio 166-3-2.

34. See Shalom Carmy, "Biblical Exegesis: Jewish Views," in *The Encyclopedia of ReIigion,* vol. 2, p. 140.

35. Consider rGyal tshab Dar ma rin chen's remarks in his *rNam bshad shying po'i rgyan,* p. 7: "[The Sphutartha*] has a subject matter because it teaches the

meaning of the [Prajnaparamita * Sutras*] and of the root sastra* (the Abhisamayalamkara*). It has a purpose because, based on it, one comes to understand that the root sastra* is an ornament to all three Mother [Prajnaparamita* Sutras*]." See also TKN, folio 3a.

36. Consider, in this regard, Bu ston Rin chen grub's definition of a sastra* as "an explanation of the [Buddha's] speech by an author who possesses a non-wandering mind and which is in accordance with the path for attaining emancipation," *Lung gi snye ma*, p. 5 (*rtsom pa po rnam gyeng med pa'i yid can gyis bka'i don bshad pa thar pa thob pa'i lain dang rjes su mthun pa*). The other major characterization of a sastra* is that based on Vasubandhu's Vyakhyayukti*, which defines it as "possessing the two qualities: that it opposes (*'chos*) and that it protects (*skyob*)." See Rong ston's *dKa'gnas zab don gnad kyi zla 'od*, folio 3a; also, Chapter Two, note 61.

37. The question is more complex than it would appear on first glance. *More fundamental*, as we shall see, does not necessarily mean shorter and more terse. As longer and more complex scriptures gained the status of canonical or semi-canonical texts, it became incumbent upon the commentarial tradition to create systematic and abbreviated forms of these works; hence the genre of pindartha* (*sdus don*) or "abridged meaning" literature, like Dignaga's* Astasahasrikapindartha*, and in Tibet the literature of the "graded stages of the path" (*lam rim*).

38. *rNam bshad synying po rgyvan* (Sarnath: dGe lugs pa Students' Society, 1977), p. 6.

39. See Haribhadra's Sphutartha* (Sarnath: Pleasure of Elegant Sayings, 1978), p. 2; also, G. Tucci, *On Some Aspects of the Doctrines of* Maitreyanatha* *and* Asanga* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1930), p. 11; and A. Wayman, "Doctrinal Affiliation of the Buddhist Master Asanga*," in *Amala* Prajna*: *Aspects of Buddhist Studies*, ed. N. H. Samtani and H. S. Prasad (Delhi: Sri Satguru, 1989), pp. 201-222.

40. A very similar question is the subject of extensive reflection in the course of dGe lugs pa monastic study of the Abhisamayalamkara* in a debate called *rtsod lan* ("A Reply to an Argument"), which is based on a passage in the Sphutartha* (*'Grel pa don gsal*, Sarnath edition, p. 7). See Tsong kha pa's comments in, LSSP, folio 39bff.

41. MOE, p. 404. The claim, however, is problematic, for Hopkins states just one page earlier that "Chadrakirti* did not treat all these topics in his *Supp1e-ment*, which is, therefore, less extensive than the *Treatise*, though of greater length" (p. 403).

42. Ibid., p. 404.

43. Bu ston, *Lung gi snye ma,* p. 5: *shes par bya ba'i yul myur du khong du chud pas byed pa ste/mdo don rgya chen rtog par byed pa'i thabs nyung 'dus sam sbas pa'i don ston pa'o/.* rGyal tshab, in the *rNam bshad snying po'i rgyan,* p. 6, gives a much simpler definition, "that which makes one easily understand the meaning of the sutras *" (*mdo'i don bde blag tu rtog par byed pa*).

44. In the words of Tsong kha pa, "Who is it that [intuits the meaning of the text]? It is the disciples of the Alamkara*. And how do they intuit it? Easily, that is, with little difficulty?" (*gang gis ni/rGyan gis gdul bya rnams kyis so/ji ltar ni/bde blag du ste tshegs chung ngur ro/*), LSSP, folio 61a. It is interesting that the Tibetan tradition considers the Prajnaparamita* Hrdaya* (The "Heart Sutra*") to be just such a "formulaic" text, for it allows the intelligent to intuit the essential message of the longer *Perfection of Wisdom* texts more easily and quickly. See D. Lopez, *The Heart* Sutra* *Explained: Indian and Tibetan Commentaries* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1988). Ultimately the single letter A is the most abbreviated of such formulas.

45. A point that resonates with Paul Griffiths's notion of "denaturalized discourse"; see his "Denaturalized Discourse: Abhidharmikas*, Propositionalists and the Comparative Philosophy of Religion," in Frank Reynolds and David Tracy, eds., *Myth and Philosophy* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1990), pp. 57-91.

46. LSSP, folio 61a.

47. Barry Holtz, *Back to the Sources,* p. 14.

48. The case in point is Alex Wayman's reply to Geshe Sopa's critique of his translation of Tsong kha pa's *Lhag mthong chen mo, Journal of the International Association of Tibetan Studies* 3, no. 1 (1980): 96, where he faults the dGe lugs pa tradition for overemphasizing the study of *yig cha* (the debate manuals) to the exclusion of more fundamental works. Wayman may be the only one to have come out in print with this view, but the view is not uncommon among buddhologists. Implicit here is the assumption that the tradition has in some way become stagnant, having lost touch with the originality to be found within the works of its founder.

49. In the great Tibetan monasteries of the dGe lugs pa school debate was said to constitute the practice of "thinking" (*bsam pa*), the second of the three knowledges spoken of in Chapter Two.

50. Not enough work has been done on the theory and practice of Tibetan monastic debate. At the present time, working with native scholars, I am compiling an annotated list of the major debate topics that form the curriculum of the Se ra Byes monastery. This study should at least introduce the

subject matter of the monastic curriculum. It is my hope to continue work along these lines and eventually to deal with more theoretical questions concerning the presuppositions and implications of the process, as well as with some of its structural and stylistic features.

51. M. Grabmann, *Die Geschichte der scholastischen Methode,* vol. 2, p. 17; see also G. Makdisi, "The Scholastic Method in Medieval Education," pp. 647-648.

52. John A. Trentman, "Scholasticism in the Seventeenth Century," in N. Kretzman et al., eds., *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 835-836.

53. Monastic debate has traditionally been practiced only by the male clergy. Only in very recent years has this practice been introduced into nuns' communities, and this with varying success.

54. Abraham Joshua Heschel, "The Study of Torah," in Jacob Neusner, ed., *Understanding Jewish Theology* (New York: KTAV, 1973), pp. 60-61.

Chapter Five. The Authority of Scripture

1. Earlier drafts of this chapter were presented as papers before the religious studies faculty of the University of Toronto and at the annual meeting of the Association for Asian Studies (San Francisco, 1988).

2. Bhavanakrama *, as translated by Stephan Beyer, *The Buddhist Experience* (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Publishing, 1974), p. 105.

3. William A. Graham, "Scripture," in the *EncycIopedia of Religion,* ed. M. Eliade (New York: Macmillan, 1985), p. 141.

4. See Sangharakshita, *A Survey of Buddhism* (Boulder, Colo.: Shambhala, 1980), pp. 31-33.

5. D.J. Kalupahana, Nagarjuna*: *The Philosophy of the Middle Way* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1986), p. 335.

6. D. Knowles, *The Evolution of Medieval Thought,* p. 97. Most of the discussion that follows is based on Knowles.

7. It might be argued that these findings do not hold for Pali Buddhism, with which Kalupahana is principally concerned. It is true that the issues we discuss later are not elaborated to the same extent in the Pall canon and its commentarial tradition. Nonetheless, lack of evidence is not disproof. It is my

contention that the views of scripture elucidated in the Mahayana * scholastic tradition do not differ radically from those of Pali Buddhism.

8. See Dennis Okholm, "Biblical Inspiration and Infallibility in the Writings of Archibald Alexander Hodge," *Trinity Journal* 5 (Spring 1976): 79-89; also George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 113.

9. In this regard it is interesting that mKhas grub rje states in his *sTong thun chen mo* that there are "some Sravakas* who believe that all of the scriptures of the Sage are strictly of definitive meaning... [and that] what distinguishes definitive from provisional [scriptures] is whether or not they can be taken literally" (DE, p. 35). This implies that there seems to have been at least one Sravaka* sect who accepted that all of the Buddha's words were literally true. The same view is implied centuries earlier by Vasubandhu in his Vyakhyayukti*; see my "'Vasubandhu's Vyakhyayukti*."

10. It will become clear that I am not using the term here as Jonathan Z. Smith does in his "Sacred Persistence," p. 48, that is, in the sense of closure, a property of canons. In a sense, however, completeness, in my sense of the term, could be taken by a tradition as implying (or justifying) closure.

11. For a discussion of this with references to the relevant Pali texts, see É. Lamotte, *Histoire du Bouddhisme Indien* (Louvain: Bibliotheque du Museon, 1958), pp. 25-26.

12. This has not prevented scholars, such as Jacob Needleman, from attempting to extend the theistic model pan-religiously. In his "Notes on Religion," an essay in *Consciousness and Tradition* (New York: Crossroads, 1982), he states, "In the traditions, scripture is sacred, not because it is about religious subjects but because it is a transmission from a higher source of a teaching which man desperately needs. In its essence, as revelation, scripture is regarded as an expression of the same creative intelligence that produced man and the universe" (p. 47).

13. W. A. Graham, "Scripture," p. 142.

14. As a clear example of this see Kelsey's remarks on the theology of Warfield, where he concludes that "from belief in scripture's inspiredness one would then infer its inerrancy. Inerrancy follows from inspiration, not the other way around. Thus the doctrine of inspiration provides us with a rule: always suppose that scripture is inspired and therefore inerrant. The rule instructs us a *priori* to treat apparent errors or inconsistencies as being merely apparent and

not real," D. Kelsey, *The Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), p. 22.

15. The analogy of the goldsmith is proof enough that this is the case:

> O Bhiksus, just as a goldsmith gets his gold, First testing by melting, cutting and rubbing, Sages accept my teaching after full examination And not just out of devotion to me.

As translated by R. A. F. Thurman in EE, p. 190.

16. For a discussion of this question in a Christian setting, see F. W. Dillistone et. al., *Scripture and Tradition* (Greenwich, Conn.: Seabury Press, 1955). On the relative authority and permanence of the written vs. the spoken word, see William Graham's remarks in *Beyond the Written Word*, p. 156; also W. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London and New York: Methuen, 1982), p. 11 passim.

17. This corroborates a point made by Graham, "Scripture," p. 141; namely, that "the supreme scripture in a tradition may play a functionally less important role or less visible role in piety than a theoretical second-order sacred text." See also M. Kapstein, "The Purificatory Gem and Its Cleansing: A Late Tibetan Polemical Discussion of Apocryphal Texts", *History of Religions* 28, no. 3: 217-244.

18. For an excellent overview of the subject, see William J. Wainright, *Philosophy of Religion* (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 1988), pp. 131-165.

19. See his "Reason and Belief in God," in A. Plantinga and N. Wolterstorff, eds., *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), pp. 16-93.

20. George I. Mavrodes, "Jerusalem and Athens Revisited," in *Faith and Rationality,* p. 195.

21. In this regard consider the words of Calvin, "But even if anyone clears God's Sacred Word from man's evil speaking, he will not at once imprint upon their hearts that certainty which piety requires. Since for unbelieving men religion seems to stand by opinion alone, they, in order not to believe anything foolish or lightly, both wish and demand rational proof that Moses and the prophets spoke divinely. But I reply the testimony of the Spirit is more excellent than all reason." Cited in George I. Mavrodes, "Jerusalem and Athens Revisited," p. 194. A similar opinion is expressed by J. R. Illingworth, *Reason and Revelation: An Essay in Christian Apology* (London: Macmillan

and Co., 1903), Chapter 7, when he defines heresy as the demand that even the "mysteries of the faith" be proven rationally.

22. This should not be interpreted to mean that the nondiscursive insight born from meditation was considered true knowledge to the exclusion of analytical understanding. It must always be remembered that, at least for the dGe lugs pas, the meditatively induced direct perception of reality and the analytically induced inference of it both have emptiness as their object; they were both pramanas * and were both necessary for spiritual progress. The yogi's trance did not provide knowledge of any new fact. It represented only a deepening of knowledge that had already been acquired conceptually. Hence, knowledge gained from words (that is, from scripture) is not here being pitted against the nonconceptual knowledge of the yogi but, as we shall see, principally against direct sense perception and inference, the paradigms of true knowledge.

23. For a comparison of the views of *different* Buddhist scholastics on the question of sabdapramana*, see T. J. F. Tillemans, "Dharmakirti*, Aryadeva and Dharmapala* on Scriptural Authority," *Tetsugaku: The Journal of the Hiroshima Philosophical Society* 38 (1986): 31-47.

24. *gsar du mi slu ba'i rig pa*, the accepted dGe lugs pa definition, see Lati Rinbochay, *Mind in Tibetan Buddhism*, ed. and trans. E. Napper (Valois, N.Y.: Gabriel/Snow Lion, 1980), p. 31 passim.

25. Compare this characterization of Dharmakirti's* position with R. P. Hayes's characterization of Dignaga's*, Dignaga* *on the Interpretation of Signs* (Dordrecht and Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1988), p. 180: "At best we can say that information about them (subtle points that are not ascertainable by the other two pramanas*) is acquired from scriptures, but about the accuracy of that information there can be no certainty. A distinction is to be made between a source of information and a source of knowledge, and scriptures may be the former without being the latter." As we shall see later, the dGe lugs pas, in their interpretation of Dharmakirti*, will want to go further in their claims and say that such points are indeed knowable, at least inductively, for they are committed to the view that every phenomenon, even the most abstruse, can be cognized pramanically.

26. For a discussion of this in the Advaita system, which posits the greatest number of pramanas*, see D. M. Datta, *The Six Ways of Knowing: A Critical Study of the Advaita Theory of Knowledge*, 2nd ed. (Calcutta: University of Caluctta, 1972).

27. R. P. Hayes, Dignaga *, pp. 178-183, discusses Dignaga's* critique of non-Buddhist views concerning scripture as a source of valid knowledge.

28. An interesting discussion of the issue of sabdapramana* in the Jain and other non-Buddhist philosophical schools is to be found in Chapter 8 of N. J. Shah, Akalanka's* *Criticism of* Dharmakirti's* *Philosophy* (Ahmedabad: L. D. Institute of Indology, 1967).

29. See, for example, M. Iqbal, The *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore: Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf, 1944).

30. See K. Cragg and M. Speight, eds., *Islam from Within,* p. 101.

31. What Tillemans, "Dharmakirti*, Aryadeva* and Dharmapala* on Scriptural Authority," p. 31, independently, has called "extreme parsimony with regard to acceptable means of knowledge."

32. See G. Makdisi, p. 655.

33. See T. J. de Boer, *The History of Philosophy in Islam,* trans. E. R. Jones (New York: Dover Publications, 1967), p. 209.

34. See for example, Dharmakirti's* own remarks concerning the "three types of pramanas*" in "Svarthanumana* *Pariccheda" of* Dharmakirti's* Pramanavarttika*, ed. D. Malvaniya, gen. ed. V. S. Agrawal, (Banares: Hindu Vishvavidyalaya, 1959), p. 153. See also the Vrtti* of Manorathanandin, ed. Swami Dwarikadas Shastri (Banares: Bauddha Bharati Series, 1968), commentary preceding verse 213; and also R. Samkrtyayana*, ed., Pramanavarttikam* *with the Commentary by* Karnakagomin* (Alahabad: Kitab Mahal, 1943), commentary preceding verse 215 (different enumeration). Concerning the three types of objects and their textual sources, see Tillemans, "Dharmakirti*," p. 44, n. 14.

35. For a clear discussion of these three types of phenomena and the way they relate to the two pramanas*, see the *Tshad ma rigs rgyan* of dGe 'dun grub (the First Dalai Lama) (Karnataka, India: Drepung Loseling Printing Press, 1984), pp. 317-322.

36. My translation of the term vastubalapravrttanumana* by the words "deductive reasoning" is, I admit, not unproblematic. I have opted for this, however, to emphasize the other form of inference against which it is pitted in the PV (agamasrita*), which I maintain is conceived by Dharmakirti* and his dGe lugs pa interpreters as a form of inductive reasoning. See Tillemans, "Dharmakirti*," pp. 32-36.

37. A similar point is made by Bhartrhari in the Vakyapadiya*; see Hayes, Dignaga*, p. 179.

38. In fact, it is following the Pramanika * tradition that in the siddhanta* literature of Tibetan Buddhism a phenomenon is defined as "that which is established by a pramana*" (*tshad mas grub pa*); see Geshe L. Sopa and J. Hopkins, *Cutting Through Appearances: Practice and Theory of Tibetan Buddhism* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Snow Lion, 1990), pp. 197 passim.

39. For a parallel in American Christian thought, see the discussion of the nineteenth century scholar and theologian Francis Wayland in George Marsden, "The Collapse of American Evangelical Academia," in *Faith and Rationality*, p. 231. For Wayland, "[revealed religion] provides some facts [as about the Atonement or the afterlife] that we could not discover otherwise" (p. 231), first brackets are mine.

40. In what follows, references to the *Autocommentary* are to the edition by R. Gnoli (Rome: IsMEO, 1960). For references to the other Sanskrit works see note 34. I have used the Tibetan translation of the *Autocommentary* in *Tshad ma rnam 'grel leu'i dang po dang de'i grel pa* (Dharamsala: Council of Religious and Cultural Affairs of H. H. the Dalai Lama, undated).

41. *rNam 'grel that lam gsal byed* (Sarnath: Pleasure of Elegant Sayings Press, 1974).

42. *rGyas pa'i bstan bcos tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi rgya cher bshad pa rigs pa'i rgya mtsho, gSungs 'bum* (Collected Works), volume *tha* (Dharamsala: Shes rig par khang, undated).

43. agamah* *punar na kimcin* na* vyapnoti*, Gnoli, *Autocommentary*, p. 107; see also Manorathanandin's comments in Shastri, p. 323.

44. rGyal tshab rje, *That lam gsal byed*, p. 174.

45. Ibid.

46. This subject is treated in more detail in the next chapter. See also Anne Klein, *Knowledge and Liberation* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Snow Lion Press, 1986) as well as her *Knowing, Naming and Negation* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Snow Lion Press, 1991); see also L. Zwilling, "Dharmakirti on Apoha," doctoral dissertation (University of Wisconsin, 1975).

47. See PV (I,212), ed. Gnoli, p. 107. We should note that although the word *chair* does not have as its meaning the real particular chair, it nonetheless expresses it (or refers to it). The problems associated with such a distinction is dealt with at some length in Chapter Six. Wittgenstein gives what might be construed as a refutation of such a theory of meaning in the *Blue and Brown Books.*

48. Translating this into the framework of syllogistic reasoning, with which the first chapter of PV is primarily concerned, we might say that only things themselves, and not words, can be valid reasons. In other words, a valid syllogism would run "a pot is impermanent because it is produced," not "a pot is impermanent because the Buddha said it was produced." In the former instance the reason is an actual state of affairs, "production," in the latter it is the expression of that state of affairs, "the Buddha's *claim* of its production." Hence, valid reasons, the kind that produce valid knowledge, must be actual states of affairs and not the verbal expressions of those states of affairs.

49. Gnoli, *Autocommeatary*, p. 107.

50. Rgyal tshab rje, *That lam gsal byed*, p. 174, says that "words... have the ability to point out (*ston par byed pa*) the thought that the speaker desires to express."

51. For example, it resembles the positions of Dilthey and Schleiermacher in seeing the text as a key to the author's intention. It differs from them, however, in that there is no attempt at proposing elaborate means (e.g., historical contextualization) of determining that intention. It is also in opposition to the relativist's stance that, once written, a text has no fixed meaning and need not signify or connote the author's intended meaning. It also runs counter to Ricoeur's thesis that "whereas in spoken discourse the intention of the speaking subject and the meaning of what is said frequently overlap, there is no such coincidence in the case of writing." See, for example, Paul Ricoeur, "Structure and Hermeneutics," translated by K. McLaughlin in *The Conf1icts of Interpretation: Essays in Hermeneutics*, ed. D. Ihde (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1974), p. 40.

52. Pramanasamuccaya * (II,5) aptavadavisamvadasamanyad* anumanata*. See H. N. Randie, *Fragments from* Dinnaga* (London: The Royal Asiatic Society, 1926; Indian reprint, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1981), pp. 17-18; and R. P. Hayes, Dignaga* *on the Interpretation of Signs*, pp. 238-239.

53. rGyal tshab rje, *Thar lam gsal byed*, p. 175.

54. Now it might be argued that restricting the use of scripture to prove only those points that can be verified in no other way is a somewhat arbitrary limitation of the use of scripture, one motivated, not by the nature of the facts to be proved, but instead by the Buddhist methodological concern for allowing scripture too great a power. If scripture can serve the function of proof in

the case of extremely hidden points, why should it not be able to be applied more widely? After all is said and done, the texts never truly answer this question.

55. See also Moses Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed*, trans. M. Friedlander (New York: Dover Publications, 1956; reprint of the 2nd ed. of 1904), pp. 40-43.

56. See Chapter One; and also rGyal tshab rje, *Thar lam gsal byed*, p. 177.

57. Ibid., p. 176.

58. This criterion is akin to the tenet of some Medieval theologians, and even some American Christian fundamentalists, that natural theology and biblical revelation are in harmony. Mavrodes, p. 233, states that "Evangelicals placed a great deal of weight on the claim that these two sources of knowledge would never conflict."

59. See Vasubandhu, Abhidharmakosabhasya *, pp. 334-335; also PD, folios 55a-55b; and my "The Development of a Buddhist Philosophy of Language" (doctoral dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1987), pp. 53-55.

60. See DE, pp. 115-116.

61. Ibid., p. 115.

62. Translation from the Tibetan in *Shes tab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa'i man ngag gi bstan bcos mngon par rtogs pa'i rgyan gyi 'grel pa don gsal* (Sarnath: Gelukpa Student Welfare Society, 1980), p. 4. See also inKhas grub rje's remarks in his TKN, pp. 742-743; PD, folio 2lb; Rong ston pa, *dKa' gnas zab don gnad kyi zla 'od* (Sarnath: Sakya Students Union, 1980), pp. 11-12; and rGyal tshab Dar ma tin chen, *rNam bshad snying po'i rgyan, gSungs 'bum* (Collected Works), volume *kha* (Delhi: Ngawang Gelek Demo), pp. 276-278.

63. See D. Knowles, *The Evolution of Medieval Thought*, p. 201.

64. D. H. Kelsey, *The Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology*.

65. Formally, this would involve what is called a *claim as to the lack of pervasion* (*ma khyab pa*) of the syllogism. If the syllogism is phrased as "point x is true because scripture X states that it is," the claim as to a lack of pervasion is (put simply) a challenge to the veracity of the conditional statement "if reason, then predicate," in this case it would be a challenge to the statement "if scripture X states that x is true, then it must be true."

Chapter Six. The Validation of Language and Thought

1. Cited by Richard Gombrich, Theravada * *Buddhism: A SociaI History from Ancient Benares to Modern Colombo* (London and New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1988), p. 152.

2. See David Knowles, *The Evolution of Medieval Thought*, pp. 206-218; Norman Kretzman, Anthony Kenny, and Jan Pinborg, eds., *The Cambridge History of Medieval Philosophy: From the Rediscovery of Aristotle to the Disintegration of Scholasticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), especially. Chapters 21-23; Moses Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed*, pp. 100-102; B. B. Price, *Medieval Thought*, pp. 130-132; Oliver Leaman, *Moses Maimonides* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 110-114; Michael Haren, *Medieval Thought: The Western Intellectual Tradition from Antiquity to the Thirteenth Century* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985), pp. 23ff; and Hossein Ziai, *Knowledge and Illumination: A Study of* Suhrawardi's* Hikmat* al-Ishraq* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990).

3. On Dignaga's* theory of sense perception see M. Hattori's Dignaga* *on Perception: Being the* Pratyaksapariccheda* of Dignaga's* "Pramanasamuccaya*" (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968); also B. K. Matilal, *Perception: An Essay on Classical Indian Theories of Knowledge* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968). The most recent and by far the most complete work on Dignaga's theories concerning language and inference is Richard P. Hayes's excellent study, Dignaga* *on the Interpretation of Signs.*

4. On the dGe lugs pa interpretation of passages in the Prasannapada* that imply a fourfold division to valid knowledge, adding scripture (*lung*) and analogy (*nyer 'jal*) to the previous two, see DE, pp. 371ff.

5. These are cited and explained by mKhas grub rje in DE, pp. 92, 117-120, 257-285. Also relevant in this regard is Nagarjuna's* Vigrahavyavartani*; see K. Bhattacharya, "The Dialectical Method of Nagarjuna*," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 1 (1971): 217-261.

6. A similar claim is to be found in C. W. Huntington, *The Emptiness of Emptiness;* see also my review and my response to his rebuttal (see Introduction, note 28 for references).

7. See DE, pp. 259 passim.

8. This is not to imply that Tsong kha pa is seen as merging the two schools that, even according to the dGe lugs pas, hold many incommensurate tenets

that could not possibly be reconciled. Instead, the synthesis is seen more as Tsong kha pa's validation of the Pramanika's * overall logical and epistemological schema and his application of their logical methodology to the sphere of Madhyamaka studies.

9. On the role of "images" in Pramanika* thought, see M. Hattori, *"Apoha* and Pratibha*," in *Sanskrit and Indian Studies in Honor of Daniel H. H. Ingalls*, ed. M. Nagatomi, B. K. Matilal, J. M. Masson, and E. Dimock (Dordrecht and Boston: D. Reidel Publishing Co., 1980).

10. See, for example, the extensive work on the subject by E. Frauwallner, "Beitrage zur Apohalehre," Wiener *Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 42 (1935): 93-102; B. K. Matilal, *Epistemology, Logic and Grammar in Indian Philosophical Analysis* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971); L. Zwilling, Dharmakirti* *on Apoha;* D. Sharma, *The Differentiation Theory of Meaning in Indian Philosophy* (The Hague: Mouton, 1969); K. K. Raja, *Indian Theories of Meaning* (Madras: The Adyar Library, 1963); A. Klein, *Knowledge and Liberation* and the accompanying volume of source material, *Knowing, Naming and Negation.*

11. Hayes, in his Dignaga* *on the Interpretation of Signs*, argues for the fact that Dignaga* and Dharmakirti* hold different views of the nature and function of language. He states that "the difference is this: whereas Dharmakirti* was the architect of a complex edifice of apologetics in which every received dogma of Indian Buddhism was justified by a multiplicity of arguments and every cherished Brahmanical belief was subjected to a barrage of feisty polemics, Dinnaga* emerged as a figure much more in line with the skeptical spirit of archaic Buddhism and early Madhyamaka philosophy... [where] the central task was not to construct and defend a rationalized system of thought but to examine the fundamental assumptions on which all our claims to understanding rest" (p. xi). Hayes is not the first to claim a disparity between the views of Dignaga* and Dharmakirti*. The issue was an important one even in medieval Tibetan exegetical literature. This is, in any case, an issue beyond the scope of the present study. From the writings of the dGe lugs pa scholastics, however, it is clear that the philosophical views of these two Pramanikas* were considered to be consonant with each other. See DE, p. 86.

12. Pramanavarttika* (PV) (I,41), verse enumeration according to the Svarthanumana* Paricceda (PVSv), ed. D. B. Malvinya (Banares: Hindu Vishvavidyalaya, 1959):

> svabhave* 'nyavinabhavo* bhavamatranurodhini*/tadabhave* svayam* bhavasyabhavah* syadabhedatah*/(p. 15)

See also the Tibetan translation in *rNam 'grel le'u dang po'i rang 'grel* (Dharamsala: Council of Cultural and Religious Affairs of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, undated), p. 34.

13. Much of the hermeneutic used to explain the distinction between perception and conceptual thought was developed in the Tibetan tradition. This means that much of the terminology used in the following has no direct Sanskrit equivalents. Where a term is clearly a Tibetanism I have refrained from hypothesizing the Sanskrit equivalent and instead give only the Tibetan in parentheses.

14. mKhas grub rje's *rNam 'grel* tik * *chen* (NGTC), Collected Works volume *tha*, Dharamsala reprint edition, 1982, folio 73a. Or put in another way, when an object appears to sense consciousness its apprehension is simply the en masse appearance of all its qualities, without their being distinguished. PV (I,47): tasmad* drstasya* bhavasya* drsta* evakhilo* gunah*/.

15. NGTC, folio 63a.

16. NGTC, folio 67b.

17. Though it seems to be a majority opinion, it is not a pan-dGe lugs pa opinion. It is a position not ascribed to by 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa, for example.

18. This is a view that seems to be implied by several passages in PV; specifically (I,48) and (I,59).

19. See S. Varma's excellent article "Analysis of Meaning in the Indian Philosophy of Language," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1925): 29-31, 34-35, where he states that Ratnakirti* held a moderate stance that tried to incorporate both real particulars and conventional universals as the objects denoted by language.

20. The nature of the error is disputed. Some might say that conceptual thought is erroneous because "the universal sign (samanyalaksasna*, *spyi mtshan*) (that is, the appearing object) appears to conceptual thought as if it existed by virtue of its own characteristic (that is, as if it were real or ultimate), when in fact it does not exist by virtue of its own characteristic," rGyal tshab Dar ma rin chen, *rNam 'grel that lain gsal byed* (TLSB) (Banares: Pleasure of Elegant Saying, 1974), p. 77. This is one possible interpretation of the nature of the error. Another popular way of characterizing the error is to say that the conceptual thought "mixes up the generic image with the actual object, like milk when it mixes into water," so that they appear to be one when in fact they are not.

21. NGTC, folio 68a.

22. mKhas grub rje states in NGTC (folio 66b) that: "the reason why things are divided into qualities qua opposites [that is, why these qualities can be predicated of things] is shown to be the fact that they exist as real entities. It [the PV] shows that since sound is born from its own causes in a state unmixed with nonproduction, permanence, and so forth, it is born in the nature of production and impermanence, [and hence that these qualities can be predicated of it]. By teaching this it shows us that the division into three qualities qua opposites, sound, impermanence, and production, is [a distinction] that is not in the nature of the entity itself, but one that is only imputed by conceptual thought [and by language]." See also S. Varma, pp. 30, 32-33, for a summary of some of the Indian responses to this notion, especially Jayanta Bhatta's *.

23. NGTC, folio 67b.

24. See, for example, TLSB, pp. 77, 79, 87-88.

25. PVSv, p. 17: *katham punaretad gamyate*vyavacchedah* sabdalingabhyam* *pratipadyate* vidhina* *na vastu* rupameveti*? Pramanantarasya* sabdantarasya* *ca* pravrtteh*. See also NGRG, p. 37; NGTC, folio 68a; and TLSB, p. 82.

26. NGTC, folios 69a-b.

27. PV (I,45): ekasyarthasvabhavasya* pratyaksasya* satah* *svayam/ko 'nyo na* drsto* bhagah* syadyah* pramanaih* pariksyate*/. See PVSv, p. 17.

28. Here *seeing* has the connotation of "appearing" and not of "ascertaining."

29. rGyal tshab rje's TLSB and inKhas grub rje's NGTC differ somewhat on the interpretation of this verse. In fact, the latter actually criticizes the interpretation of the former in a convincing way. We follow the NGTC here.

30. PV (I,48): *vastugrahe* 'numanacca* *dharmasyaikasya* niscaye*/*sarvadharmagraho 'pohe* nayaam* dosah* prasajyate/. See PVSv, p. 17.

31. The autocommentary to PV (I,59); PVSv, p. 20; NGRG, pp. 44-45. This is of course the passage that I referred to previously as proof text of the fact that the Pramanikas* do not accept that sense perception ascertains its obiect.

32. PV (I,53); PVSv, p. 18; NGRG, p. 41: *anyathai kena* sabdena* vyapta* *ekatra vastuni*/buddhya* va* nanyavisaya* *iti* paryayata* bhavet/.

33. PVSv, p. 18: "Why is it that when it sees that [object], it does not ascertain its own nature (svabhava*)? It is because of error." See also NGRG, p. 39.

34. TLSB, p. 85: "if such qualities as 'permanence' were not predicated of sound by reification then there would be no need for other valid cognitions,

but because we see that such forms of reification *do* exist [there is a need of counteracting agents in the form of other valid cognitions and words]."

35. PV (I,51); PVSv, p. 18; NGRG, p. 40: niscayaropamanasorbadhyabavatah */samaropaviveke* 'sya pravrttiriti* sajyate/.

36. TLSB, p. 87.

37. The same applies of course to the reification that apprehends' things to truly exist and the ascertainment of emptiness. They are antithetical thoughts, the former destroying the latter. See, for example, DE, pp. 212 passim.

38. TLSB, p. 86.

39. This can be seen again and again in DE. It is the implicit reason behind Tsong kha pa's and mKhas grub rje's insistence on the identification of the object to be negated in the understanding of emptiness (DE, pp. 92ff); it is the basis of mKhas grub rje's defense of syllogistic reasoning against the critiques of those who consider logic to be incompatible with the tenets of the Madhyamaka (DE, pp. 100 passim); it is behind his interpretation of the Prasangika* critique of the *svatantra* (DE, pp. 259ff); and it is at the bottom of his own critique of the view that the Prasangikas* maintain no philosophical positions (DE, pp. 102 passim).

Chapter Seven. The Defense of Logic

1. This chapter is a revised and expanded version of an essay that first appeared in the *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 15 (1988): 55-62, under the title "The Prasangikas* on Logic: Tibetan dGe lugs pa Exegesis on the Question of Svatantras."

2. As translated by A. C. Graham in *Disputers of the Tao: Philosophical Argument in Ancient China* (La Salle, II1.: Open Court, 1989), p. 37.

3. From his essay, "The Logic of 1873," *Collected Papers*, ed. C. Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1931-35), vol. 7, p. 322.

4. B. B. Price, p. 124; see also EÉtienne Gilson's masterful study, *Reason and Revelation in the Middle Ages* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966).

5. See A. C. Graham, *Disputers of: the Tao, op. cit.*, pp. 37-39.

6. See, for example, a discussion of the implications of his doctrine of "learned ignorance" (docta ignorantia) in Armard A. Maurer, *Medieval Phi-*

losophy, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medeival Studies, 1982), pp. 310-324.

7. See his *lTa ba'i shan 'byed theg mchog gnad gyi zla zer* (Sarnath: Sakya Students' Union, 1988), pp. 52-53.

8. See, for example, A. C. Graham, *Disputers of the Tao,* especially his Appendix 1; also Chad Hansen, *Language and Logic in Ancient China* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1983).

9. Though the concern of a number of Indian philosophical schools, it became one of the chief foci of interest for the Nyayas * and the Pramanikas*. See Chapter Six.

10. Particularly in the works of Aristotle.

11. See, for example, Shams Constantine Inati's translation of Ibn Sina* (= Avicenna, 980-1037), *Remarks and Admonitions, Part One: Logic* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1984).

12. Richard Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), p. 170.

13. Ibid., pp. 170-171.

14. One of the most developed discussions of this subject in Indian Buddhism is to be found in the "Pararthanumana*" chapter of Dharmakirti's* Pramanavarttika*.

15. P, dBu ma *tsa*, folio 4a; this is of course commented on by Buddhapalita*, P, dBu ma *tsa*, folio 197b; by Candrakirti* in his Prasannapada*, ed. L. de la Vallée Poussin (Bibliotheca Buddhica IV, 1903-1913), pp. 34ff; sDe dge edition (Tokyo: Faculty of Letters of the University of Tokyo, 1978), dBu ma 'a, folio 11a. The general discussion of the issue in the Prasannapada*, however, begins earlier (Sanskrit p. 29, Tibetan folio 9a) with a discussion of the compatibility of the subject of a syllogism based on the renowned example of the "impermanence of sound." There is, however, another extensive discussion of the meaning of *svatantra* reasoning in the Prasannapada* in its extensive commentary to the first verse of the Karika* (Sanskrit p. 14, Tibetan folio 5b). This is the renowned passage in which Candrakirti* refutes Bhavaviveka's* attack of Buddapalita's* methodology. It is commented upon extensively in the *sTong thun chen mo* of mKhas grub rje; see DE, pp. 290ff.

16. See my review of C. W. Huntington's *The Emptiness of Emptiness;* see Introduction, note 28.

17. mKhas grub dGe legs dpal bzang, *sTong thun chen mo* (TTC) in Madhyamika * Text Series, vol. 1 (New Delhi: Lha mkhar yongs 'dzin, 1972), p. 294 (all page 'numbers in this chapter refer to the Arabic enumeration of the folios of the text). For an interesting discussion of this question in a non-dGe lugs pa source, see Rong ston pa Sakya* rgyal mtshan's treatment of whether the Madhyamikas* do or do not believe in pramanas* and whether or not they have views, in his *dBu ma la 'jug pa'i rnam bshad nges don rnam nges,* in *Two Controversial Madhyamaka Treatises* (Bhutan), pp. 71-73.

18. Nor are such views a thing of the past. This is, for example, the stance taken by Mervyn Sprung in "Nietzsche and Nagarjuna*: The Origins and Issue of Skepticism," in *Revelation in Indian Thought*, ed. H. Coward and K. Sivaraman [Emeryville, Calif.: Dharma, 1977]: *"Buddhi*, the ratiocinative faculty, is as subject to the klesas* as character and motives (samskaras*) are. The Madhyamikas'* attack on all theories, all ways of looking at things, all perspectives, as the key to removing the klesas*, follows from this." (p. 165) And also: "Madhyamika* sets out, as is well known, to undermine not only all philosophies and all ideologies but every last category and concept constituting the everyday world on which the philosophies and ideologies are founded" (p. 165). Nor is Sprung alone; for a detailed discussion of this view in the Western academic literature, see "Dzong kha pa and Modern Interpreters II: Negating Too Much," Chapter 5 of E. S. Napper's "Dependent-Arising and Emptiness" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1985) pp. 159-193.

19. This also seems to be the view of D. Seyfort Ruegg in "The Uses of the Four Positions of the Catuskoti* and the Problem of the Description of Reality in Mahayana* Buddhism," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 5 (1977): 8-9; also throughout his "On Thesis and Assertion in the Madhyamika*/dBu ma," in *Contributions on Tibetan and Buddhist Philosophy,* ed. E. Steinkellner and H. Tauscher (Vienna: Institute for Tibetan and Buddhist Studies, 1983), see especially pp. 224-225 and 234-236.

20. TTC, p. 295. For a similar dichotomy of opinions concerning the views of Nietzsche, see Alexander Nehemas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985), pp. 2 passim.

21. I deal with this issue in more detail in an unpublished paper entitled, "A Link of Non-Being: Buddhism and the Concept of an Hierarchical Ontology."

22. TTC, p. 296.

23. To what extent these views were, individually or collectively, held by historical personages is an extremely difficult question to answer and one that

is, in any case, beyond the scope of the present discussion. The reader is referred to D. Seyfort Ruegg, *The Literature of the* Madhyamika * *School of Philosophy in India* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrasowitz, 1981), and the "Introduction" of R. A. F. Thurman's *Essence of True Eloquence* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984). See also Paul Williams's "rMa bya pa byang chub brtson 'grus on Madhyamaka Method," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 13 (1985): 205-225.

24. 24. TTC, p. 313.

25. Ibid., pp. 316-317. He then goes on to state that not only must the subject of the syllogism be established in this way, but so must all of the other parts of the syllogism and the trimodal criteria.

26. Ibid., pp. 317-318. As regards the Pramanika's* views on the ontological status of different objects and their relation to their respective pramanas, see Chapter Six.

27. *paraprasiddha* or *parasiddha* (anumana*)see, for example, the Prasannapada* of Candrakirti*, ed. L. de la Vailée Poussin, pp. 34-35, 272.

28. TTC, p. 318.

Chapter Eight. Language and Ontology

1. *Language and Ontology* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1969), p. 57.

2. Buddhist nominalism has also been discussed by R. P. Hayes, in Dignaga* *on the Interpretation of Signs*, Chapter 5; and by M. Hattori, "The Sautrantika* Background of the *Apoha* Theory," in L. S. Kawamura and K. Scott, eds., *Buddhist Thought and Asian Civilization*, Guenther Festschrift (Emeryville, Calif.: Dharma Publishing, 1977), pp. 47-58.

3. Excellent treatments of nominalism in medieval Christian scholasticism are to be found in Stephen Chak Tornay, *Okham: Studies and Selections* (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1938), and in Heiko Augustinus Oberman, *The Harvest of Meclieval Theology* (Durham, N.C.: Labyrinth Press, 1983).

4. See, for example, Meyrick H. Carre, *Realists and Nominalists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946).

5. For a more complete exposition of the doctrine of the two truths, see M. Sprung, ed., *The Problem of Two Truths in Buddhism and Vedanta* (Boston:

D. Reidel, 1973). An example of a scholastic treatment of the subject is to be found in M. D. Eckel, trans., Jnanagarbha's * *Commentary on the Distinction Between the Two Truths* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1987). See also J. Hopkins, *Meditation on Emptiness*, pp. 172 passim; also DE, pp. 357-379.

6. H. Putnam, *Mind, Language and Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

7. The classical idealist notion that all phenomena are of the nature of mind, that external objects do not exist, and that the appearance of an external world is an illusion. Translations into Western languages of texts that deal with the formulation of the Yogacara* theory of emptiness from this perspective abound. See, for example, L. de la Vallée Poussin, Vijnaptimatratasiddhi*: *La Siddhi de Hiuan-tsang* (Paris: Geuthner, 1928-1948), 3 vols.; Thomas A. Kochmutton, A *Buddhist Doctrine of Experience: A New Translation and Interpretation of the Works of Vasubandhu the* Yogacarin* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1982); S. Anacker, *Seven Works of Vasubandhu: The Buddhist Psychological Doctor* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1984).

8. There is a distinction to be made between the Svatantrika* and Prasangika* branches of the Madhyamaka school as regards the linguistic formulation of the theory of emptiness. For a detailed exposition of this, see DE, pp. 173ff.

9. Granted that the relationship of language to ontology could be discussed not only in the context of the Mahayana* schools, but as it occurs in the Niksyas*, the *Abhidharma*, and the different sects of early Buddhism as well. Given that our task is to discuss language in the scholastic tradition, however, we restrict ourselves here to the question as it applies to the Yogacara* and Madhyamaka schools.

10. See DE, pp. 52-61. In his treatment of this question, as throughout the entire *sTong thun chen mo* mKhas grub rje relies heavily on Tsong kha pa's classic text, the *Legs bshad snying po*. See R. A. F. Thurman, *Essence of Eloquence*, pp. 191-252.

11. DE, pp. 52-61.

12. A translation of the relevant portion of the Bodhisattvabhumi* dealing with this issue, the "Tattvartha*" chapter, is to be found in Janice Willis, *On Knowling Reality* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979).

13. See, for example, DE, pp. 66-67.

14. DE, p. 67.

15. DE, pp. 52-53.

16. I am using the verb *to predicate* here in a general sense that allows for adjectival expressions such as "the red rose" to count as an instance of the quality red being predicated of the subject rose, which is the usage in the Tibetan literature we are examining. Tibetan uses the same verb (*'dogs pa*) to refer even to the simple act of naming. Hence, in Tibetan, one single verb encompasses within its semantic field the act of naming, adjectival qualification, and "predication" as the latter is normally understood in English.

17. DE, pp. 53-63.

18. Here we are refering primarily to the "Sautrantika *" of Dignaga* and Dharmakirti*: the "Sautrantikas* Following Reasoning," as they are called in dGe lugs pa siddhanta* literature; see Geshe L. Sopa and J. Hopkins, *Cutting Through Appearances*, pp. 221-222. The fact that the works of Dignaga* and Dharmakirti* were considered sources for both Yogacara* and Sautrantika* philosophies, schools that the dGe lugs pas believe to hold disparate views, has never seemed to be perceived as a major problem for these exegetes. The "nominalism" of the Sautrantikas* has been discussed by M. Hattori in "The Sautrantika* Background of the *Apotha* Theory," pp. 52-56.

19. The point is obscure even in the *sTong thun chen mo.* In DE, p. 57, for example, he pits "existence by virtue of own characteristic" against "being a reification" (*sgro btags*), implying that "what *does* exist by virtue of its own characteristic" must be a svalaksana*. Elsewhere (pp. 65-66), he discusses the Sautrantikas* notion of "existing by virtue of being a svalaksana*" vis-ô-vis the Yogacara* notion and concludes that the Sautrantikas* may be loathe to say of certain things (he gives an example involving space) that "it exists by virtue of being a svalaksana*," wishing instead to use expressions like "existing by virtue of its own reality," but concludes that the Yogacaras* force the Sautrantikas* into accepting the equivalence of the two expressions.

20. DE, p. 55.

21. Ibid. mKhas grub rje distinguishes between "the fact of form's being (*yin pa*) the cognitive basis of conceptual thought as something that does not exist by virtue of its own characteristic," a tenet shared by both the Yogacara* and Sautrantika* schools, and "form's not being the cognitive basis of conceptual thought by virtue of its own characteristic," an uncommon tenet of the Yogacara*, indeed their linguistic formulation of emptiness. I am afraid that the distinction eludes me.

22. Ibid.

23. DE, p. 59.

24. DE, p. 57.

25. DE, pp. 61-63.

26. DE, pp. 63-66.

27. See, for example DE, pp. 27, 42 et passim. Also J. Hopkins, *Meditation on Emptiness,* pp. 365ff.

28. This seems to be misunderstood by C. Huntington in "A 'Non-Referential' View of Language and Conceptual Thought in the Work of Tsong kha pa," *Philosophy East and West* 33, no. 4 (1983), when he states that "names... have no real objects insofar as they do not correspond to any actual referent but only to other names." Nor is Huntington alone in this opinion, Mervyn Sprung expresses a similar view when refering to the Madhyamikas *. He states, in his "Non-Cognitive Langugage in Madhyamika* Buddhism," in L. S. Kawamura and K. Scott, eds., *Buddhist Thought and Asian Civilization,* p. 246, that "at no level and at no point does language in fact name anything. It does not 'refer', as we say." M. Hattori, "The Sautrantika* Background of the *Apoha* Theory," p. 47, expresses a similar view when he states that "the Bauddhas denied that a word has a direct reference to any real entity, whether specific or universal," though scarcely a page later he seems to reverse his position when he states that "the object referred to by the word 'cow' is the universal" (p. 48). Granted that even the referents of names are nominal entities, this does not imply, however, that they are nonexistent or that they are themselves names. Names are words and are therefore sounds, and clearly not all referents of words are sounds. When Madhyamikas* claim that all entities are "mere names" (*ming tsam*) it does not imply that every entity is but a sound, which is absurd, nor does it imply that they have other sounds as their referents. Instead they are claiming something more profound about the ontological nature of entities.

29. According to the dGe lugs pa interpretation, the Madhyamaka does not forsake the definition of an existent thing as something "cognized by a valid knowledge," though it is clear from certain passages in the *sTong thun chen mo* that this opinion was not shared by all the Tibetan exegetes.

30. For example, DE, p. 101.

31. Ibid.

32. See DE, pp. 196-200.

33. It is maintained in the tradition that these two must be different. The basis of the label is that entity onto which the name is affixed, in the case of the chariot, say, it would be the collection of different parts, such as the wheels,

hubs, axle, etc., or the combination of these. The referent is the labeled object itself, in this case the chariot. This distinction is extremely important to understanding what follows.

34. DE, p. 101.

35. Ibid.

36. DE, pp. 92-95.

37. Ibid.

38. DE, pp. 174-180.

39. The Svatantrikas *, for example, are said to deny "true existence," but to hold that phenomena "exist by virtue of their own characteristic."

40. Detailed treatments of the siddhanta* schema are to be found in Geshe L. Sopa and J. Hopkins, *Cutting Through Appearances*, pp. 109-322; see also my "The Canonization of Philosophy," which contains extensive bibliographical references to a variety of works that deal with siddhanta*.

41. DE, p. 176.

42 The classical scriptural basis for nominalism is described in DE, pp. 169-172.

43. DE, pp. 90-92, 168-169. Though not completely clear, this seems to be a view espoused by Huntington, "A Non-Referential View," and by Katz, "Prasanga* and Deconstruction," p. 2, who characterizes Madhyamaka hermeneutics as "a return to everyday language, laden as it is by logocentrism." With both Huntington (especially in his later work, *The Emptiness of Emptiness)* and Katz, the view seems to arise from the wish to find similarities between Madhyamaka and deconstructionist hermeneutics.

44. DE, pp. 90-92, 169.

45. Here *worldly being* refers to "all ordinary beings and Aryans* still in training (*'phags pa slob pa*)." DE, p. 168.

46. DE, p. 169.

47. DE, p. 168.

48. The Prasangikas* of course go much further in their claims. This is a point that Huntington, "A Non-Referential View," seems to miss when, in the context of characterizing Tsong kha pa's interpretation of ignorance in the Madhyamaka, he says that "ignorance is defined as a technical term refering to the misapprehension of the meaning of words and concepts as if they referred to entities which were ultimately real" (p. 329). This, as we have

shown, is something asserted by all Buddhists from the Sautrantikas * on up. That words do not refer to real particulars (in the Sautrantika* case), to real external objects (in the Yogacara* case), and to real phenomena (in the Madhyamika* case) are all reflections of a pan-Buddhist tendency to demean the strength of linguistic reference. It is not a strictly Madhyamaka notion.

49. This is not to imply that the realists' claims to nominalism are equivalent, even within the limited sphere to which it applies, to those of the Prasafigikas*. See DE, pp. 69 passim.

Chapter Nine. Ineffability and the Silence of the Buddha

1. As cited and translated in P. R. Ackroyd and C. F. Evans, eds., *The Cambridge History of the Bible* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 379.

2. *Avatamsaka* Sutra*, my translation from the Tibetan; sDe dge, Phal chen kha, folio 173b.

3. M. de Certeau, *The Mystic Fable. Vol. 1. The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, trans. M. B. Smith (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

4. Ibid., p. 115.

5. For another instance of the claim that the Dharma is "inconceivable" (in the *Uttaratantra)*, see Chapter Two.

6. See his *Knowing the Unknowable God*, especially Chapter 4.

7. See his *Disputers of the Tao*, pp. 199-202; see also Livia Kohn, *Early Chinese Mysticism: Philosophy and Sotetiology in the Taoist Tradition* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992).

8. buddheragocarastattvam*. For a complete discussion of this question see M. Sweet's "Bodhicaryavatara* (IX,2) as a Focus for Tibetan Interpretations of the Two Truths in the Prasangika* Madhyamika*," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 2, no. 2 (1979): 79-89.

9. See, for example, DE, pp. 92-124. This question has been dealt with at great length by D. Seyfort Ruegg in "On Thesis and Assertion in the Madhyamaka/dBu ma." Though Ruegg is quite faithful to the views of mKhas grub rje in his summary of the position of the *sTong thun chen mo*, (pp. 215-227), much of what he states before and after this summary is not consistent with mKhas grub rje's account (something that does not seem to escape Ruegg himself). For example, inKhas grub rje would object to being characterized as

the follower of a tradition "who makes no postulation concerning entities" (pp. 211-213, 234). Bhava * is a concept that is perfectly acceptable to him. It seems that Ruegg himself senses this when later (p. 215) he characterizes the Madhyamaka critique, not as the repudiation of entities (bhava*) but as the critique of "the substantial existence of some kind of bhava*." Ruegg seems also to confuse at times the Prasangika* critique of the *svatantra* for a critique of logical proof in general (pp. 224-225, 234, where he posits that the statements of the Madhyamaka "are clearly not intended to be factitive and to possess apodictic and probative force in virtue of a formal process of inference and deduction"). In fact, he relates these two stances (the repudiation of entities and proof) (p. 235). In short, Ruegg's claim that the Madhyamaka's theses are "non-assertive" (p. 235) and non-"probative" (p. 236) may represent one strain of Madhyamaka thought, but it is certainly not representative of dGe lugs pa exegesis.

10. See D. Seyfort Ruegg's "The Uses of the Four Positions of the Catuskoti and the Problems of the Description of Reality in Mahayana* Buddhism," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 5 (1977): 59, no. 4, for further bibliographical sources.

11. T. R. V. Murti, *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1974), pp. 36ff.

12. See also T. W. Organ's "The Silence of the Buddha" in *Philosophy East and West* 4, no. 2 (1954), which is representative of this viewpoint.

13. G. M. Nagao, "The Silence of the Buddha," in *Studies in Indology and Buddhology* (Kyoto: Nakamura Press, 1955), p. 143.

14. Murti, *Central Philosophy*, p. 41; and on p. 43 he states, "But all our accounts are unanimous in declaring that the Tathagata* characterized all views as things of dogmatic speculation." This makes Murti's view identical to that of Tibetan exegetes who claim that Madhyamikas hold no philosophical position, a view criticized by mKhas grub rje in the *sTong tun chen mo*, as we have seen.

15. See Mahavyutpatti*, ed. R. Sasaki, nos. 4652-4666.

16. I say here *minimally* important because, although the principal consideration is the mental disposition of the questioner, the content is slightly important in that the question would have to deal with a topic about which the questioner must be deluded, in this case the self or the world.

17. See AA (IV,22) and Se ra rJe btsun chos kyi rgyal mtshan's commentary to the fourth chapter, the *Khabs bzhi pa'i spyi don* (Bylakuppe: Sera Je Monastery Press, undated blockprint edition), folios 72a passim.

18. This nomenclature is based on a passage from the Salistambha * Sutra* (I,210). See Tsong kha pa's *rTsa shes* tik* *chen* (TSTC) in *rJe'i gsung lta ba'i khor* (this is in two volumes and the TSTC spans the latter part of the first and the beginning of the second, hence volume number is supplied only when reference is to the second) (Dharamsala: Private Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, undated), pp. 166 and 181.

19. rJe btsun pa, *Khabs bzhi pa'i spyi don,* folio 75a. They are

1. the view that the self existed in the past

2. the view that it did not exist in the past

3. both

4. neither

5. the view that the self is permanent

6. that it is impermanent

7. that it is both

8. that it is neither

The next four, related to a later extreme, simply substitute *future* for *past,* and the last four are the four extreme possibilities dealing with "the self having an end."

20. See MMK (XXVII,1-2); TSTC, vol. II, pp. 166-183; and rJe btsun pa, PD-IV folios 75a-b. The latter, however, seems to confuse 5-8 and 13-16 and instead of having *the world*, has *the self.* This, however, contradicts the other two sources.

21. See Mulamadhyamakakarika* (XXV, 21); TSTC vol. II, pp. 155-156; and rJe btsun pa, folio 75b. The MMK verse actually makes no mention of 13-14, but it is supplied by the commentators.

22. PD IV, folio 75b. This differs somewhat from the exposition in TSTC, vol. II, pp. 166-167, in commentary to (XXVII, 1).

23. D. Seyfort Ruegg, "The Uses," p. 1.

24. PD IV, folio 76a. We also see a similar classification scheme being advocated by Tsong kha pa in TSTC, pp. 166-167. See also Murti, *Central Philosophy*, pp. 38-40, where the classification differs from rJe btsun pa's.

25. PD IV, folio 76a.

26. As cited in ibid., folio 76b.

27. Tsong kha pa (TSTC, p. 175) adds this qualifier in the same way. He say's that "therefore, perceiving the anterior extreme, that is, to *inherently* (*rang bzhin gyis*) view the world to be impermanent, is not correct." In TSTC, p. 177, he uses the equivalent qualifier *natural1y* (*ngo bos*). It must be pointed out, however, that according to one interpretation, because *the world* in this

expression already refers to a misperceived subject, such a qualifier is not necessary. We shall return to this later.

28. PD IV, folio 78a.

29. He states (TSTC, vol. II, p. 180), "If one understands the interdependence of self and phenomena via the incontrovertible refutation of the existence of an essence, that is, of existence by virtue of own characteristic, by means of the preceding logical arguments, one will not be able to be led astray by any of the incorrect philosophical (*kun btags pa'i*) views of the Buddhist or non-Buddhist schools, that is, by the wrong views [known as] 'depending upon an anterior extreme' and so forth." This implies that among these views there are to be found the views of the Buddhist realists as well.

30. In this regard, the Salistambha * Sutra* is quoted in TSTC, vol. II, p. 181, "In the world, whatever sramana* or brahmana* views there may be, whether they advocate self, or sentient being, life or person or virtue or auspiciousness... they are all eliminated by [the wisdom that understands reality, that perceives interdependent arising,] and having understood this, it cuts them from the root so that, just like the head of a tala*, they will never appear..."

31. TSTC, vol. II, p. 168.

32. TSTC, vol. II, p. 175.

33. TSTC, vol. II, pp. 177, 179.

34. See Candrakirti's* comments to Mularnadhyatnakakarika* (XVIII,8) in the Prasannapada*; and also Madhyamakavatarabhasya*, ed. L. de la Vallée Poussin; Madhyamakavatara* *par* Candrakirti* (Osnabruck: Biblio Verlag, 1970; reprint of the 1907 ed.), pp. 192-193.

35. TSTC, vol. II, p. 180. This is also similar to an example that occurs in an Abhidharma context. Vasubandhu, in the Pudgalaviniscaya* section of the Abidharmakosa* states: "If that living being does not exist at all how can it be declared as being either the same as or as different from [the body]? [It would be like] saying that 'turtle hair is rough or soft,'" *mDzod rang 'grel* (Dharamsala: Council of Religious Affairs of H. H. the Dalai Lama, n.d.), p. 292.

36. D. Seyfort Ruegg, "The Uses," pp. 6-7.

37. Ibid., p. 61, no. 23. This is Ruegg's translation of vandhyasutas-yavadatasyamatapartisedhavad* *ubhayam etad pratisiddham.*

Chapter Ten. Conclusion

1. Jean Leclerq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God,* p. 199.

2. George Makdisi, "The Scholastic Method in Medieval Education," p. 643. The insertion is mine.

3. The same holds true for those that stress certain types of differences, for different answers to a question are interesting only to the extent that they are answers to similar questions, hence presuming similarity at some level.

4. A. C. Graham, *Dispraters of the Tao,* p. 142.

5. On the issue of whether or not there is such a thing as "African philosophy," see Tsenay Serequeberhan, ed., *African Philosophy: The Essential Readings* (New York: Paragon House, 1991).

6. Giuseepe Mazzotta, "Antiquity and the New Arts in Petrarch," in Marina Brownlee et al., eds., *The New Medievalism* (London and New York: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), p. 46.

7. Of course, the Buddhism that was introduced into Tibet in the seventh and eighth centuries was already the scholastic form of Buddhism known in India, making the point of origin in the Tibetan case simply the point of the introduction of Buddhism. It might be argued that Tibet then went on to evolve an indigenous from of Buddhist scholasticism sufficiently different from its Indian counterpart to be considered a separate tradition, and this may be true. The *origins* of Tibetan Buddhist scholasticism, however, clearly lie in India. The question of terminus is likewise a nonissue, because the dGe lugs pas, among others, still preserve a tradition of scholastic learning, at least in exile. Of course Indian Buddhist scholasticism came to an end with the collapse of Buddhism in India.

8. We must, however, be wary of glib answers to these questions. For example, some medieval European historians have claimed that European scholasticism died out when it became too abstract and recondite. Having a comparative perspective on such issues, however, gives us the advantage of at least one other culture with respect to which a particular thesis might be put to the test. This in turn gives us a perspective from which to question facile historical claims. We know that in other culturesTibet, for exampleabstraction was not sufficient to bring about the demise of scholasticism. Clearly then abstraction alone is not sufficient to bring an end to scholastic traditions.

This in turn leads us to ask what other factors, either by their presence or absence, might, in concatenation with abstraction, cause the demise of scholasticism.

9. M. M. Bakhtin, "The Problem of Speech Genres." In *Speech Genres and Other Essays*, trans. Vern W. McGee (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), p. 71.

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